



# Islam and World Peace

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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Goodword Books  
A-21, Sector 4, NOIDA-201301, India  
Mob. +91-8588822672, Tel.: +91120-4314871  
email: [info@goodwordbooks.com](mailto:info@goodwordbooks.com)  
[www.goodwordbooks.com](http://www.goodwordbooks.com)

Goodword Books, Chennai  
324, Triplicane High Road,  
Triplicane, Chennai-600005  
Tel. +9144-4352-4599  
Mob. +91-9790853944, 9600105558  
email: [chennaigoodword@gmail.com](mailto:chennaigoodword@gmail.com)

Goodword Books, Hyderabad  
2-48/182, Plot No. 182, Street No. 22  
Telecom Nagar Colony, Gachi Bawli  
Hyderabad-500032  
Tel. 04023000131, Mob. 07032641415  
email: [hyd.goodword@gmail.com](mailto:hyd.goodword@gmail.com)

Islamic Vision Ltd.  
426-434 Coventry Road, Small Heath  
Birmingham B10 0UG, U.K.  
Tel. 121-773-0137  
e-mail: [info@ipci-iv.co.uk](mailto:info@ipci-iv.co.uk)  
[www.islamicvision.co.uk](http://www.islamicvision.co.uk)

Center for Peace and Spirituality USA  
2665 Byberry Road  
Bensalem, PA 19020  
Cell: (617) 960-7156  
e-mail: [cps@alrisala.org](mailto:cps@alrisala.org)

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# Preface



This book is a collection of articles that I have published over the years in the Urdu magazine *Al-Risala* on the subject of Islam and peace. These articles were written with the basic intention of clearing up the misunderstandings that abound about Islamic teachings about peace and war and to state the authentic position on these matters.

Islam is a completely peaceful religion. In Islam, peace is the general rule or norm and war is only an exception. This rare exception is always as a compulsion in response to the actions of others. War is not something that Muslims should initiate unilaterally.

The basic aim of Islam is to transform people's thinking and to bring about an intellectual revolution in their minds based on *tawhid*, or the oneness of God. A *hadith*, contained in the *Fath al-Bari*, tells us that the Prophet observed that if the heart is in a proper condition, the whole human body will likewise be so. Conversely, if the heart is in poor condition, the whole body will malfunction. The 'heart' and 'body' are symbolically used in this narrative to suggest that just as our bodily health depends on the health of our hearts, the quality of our religious lives depends on our faith or *iman*.

Psychologists tell us that our thoughts determine our actions. Thus, the quality of our actions depends on the quality of our thoughts. That is why Islam places great stress on nurturing

right thinking. This being the case, war is excluded from Islam's plan of affirmative action. Islam teaches us to focus entirely, and under all conditions, on the awakening of right thinking and awareness.

War is something that undermines, rather than facilitates, the plan of human reform that Islam stands for. One can derive no real gain or benefit from war or any other form of violence. This is why if all possible efforts to prevent war are made but, yet, they fail and one is compelled to engage in war, the first thing for the followers of Islam to do is to seek to put an end to the fighting as soon as possible, so that in a climate of peace the real positive work of Islam can carry on unhindered.

In this context, it is pertinent to say a few words about the notion of jihad in Islam. Jihad is, in fact, another name for peaceful struggle. In today's parlance, it could be called 'peaceful activism'—or, in other words, using peaceful means to try to attain certain lofty objectives.

The literal meaning of jihad is 'effort' or 'struggle'. The Quran speaks about a 'great jihad' (*jihad-e kabir*)—engaging in jihad through the Quran (25:52). According to a *hadith*, a *mujahid*, one who engages in jihad, is one who, for the sake of obedience to God, combats his own lower self, or *nafs*. According to another *hadith*, when the Prophet returned from the Tabuk campaign, he said, 'We have returned from lesser jihad to greater jihad.' The 'lesser jihad' is military struggle, while the 'greater jihad' is the struggle against one's own lower self, that is to say, the struggle to control one's negative and undesirable feelings and to persevere in the life of God's choice in all circumstances.

Jihad, if understood correctly, is an entirely peaceful action. At the individual level, to engage in jihad is to refuse to deviate from God's path in the face of the desires and inclinations of one's *nafs* and the baneful influence of the environment. It is to face the difficulties and challenges that stand in one's path and remain steadfast on the path of the Truth. At the collective level, jihad may be defined as a peaceful struggle.

Jihad is linked to intellectual awakening. It entails enkindling

among people a healthy spirit, exhorting them to positive action and seeking to refine their character. Jihad inspires people to seek to become beneficial to others and to be concerned about their welfare. The weapon used in jihad is love, not hatred or violence.

Some people misunderstand jihad as the equivalent of war, or what is called *qital* in Arabic. Considering the two to be synonymous is really to misconstrue or distort the significance of jihad. The fact of the matter is that *qital* is a very limited and temporary action. On the other hand, jihad is a continuous and comprehensive or all-embracing process. Jihad is an exalted process in Islam, which should carry on continuously, every day and at every moment in our lives. Under no condition should it stop.

When a person seeks the Truth, he is immersed in an intellectual jihad. When he realizes the Truth, his jihad continues throughout his life, taking on added dimensions. He must now engage in jihad or struggle to the utmost against his own self and his base, Satanic, desires and against the difficulties and challenges of his surroundings. In this way, he strengthens and deepens his faith and trust in God. He engages in continuous constructive intellectual development, and so his realization of the Truth continuously develops, till at last he reaches the highest possible stage.

According to a *hadith*, one's faith increases and decreases. To save one's faith from erosion requires a continuous jihad. Living in society, one is repeatedly beset by negative feelings or emotions, such as anger, jealousy, revenge, pride, ingratitude, greed, and so on. These negative emotions threaten to weaken or decrease one's faith. In such a situation, one has to awaken one's consciousness and struggle against these negative tendencies and inner feelings and eliminate them. This is a jihad, and without this jihad no one can save his or her faith from damage, decrease or erosion.

Wahiduddin Khan  
skhan@goodwordbooks.com

## CHAPTER ONE

# *Peace and Islam*



In February 1998, I participated in a symposium at the American University in Washington, where I spoke on the topic of Islam and Peace. In the course of my speech, I said:

It is no exaggeration to say that Islam and violence are contradictory to each other. The concept of Islamic violence is so obviously unfounded that *prima facie* it stands rejected. The fact that violence is not sustainable in the present world is enough to support the belief that violence as a principle is quite alien to the scheme of things in Islam. Islam claims to be an eternal religion, and an eternal religion cannot have a principle in its scheme which is not sustainable in successive periods of human history. Any attempt to bracket violence with Islam amounts to casting doubt upon the very eternity of the Islamic religion.

This means that the term ‘Islamic terrorism’ is, in fact, as much a misnomer as the phrase ‘pacifistic terrorism’. The fact is that all Islamic teachings are based, directly or indirectly, on the principle of peace.



PEACE IN THE QURAN AND HADITH

Peace is integral to the meaning of the very word 'Islam' itself. The root of the word 'Islam' is *s-l-m*, which is related to the Arabic word for 'peace'. And so, Islam means a religion of peace. According to a *hadith* (recorded in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*), the Prophet remarked that peace is part of Islam. Likewise, the Prophet is reported to have declared that a Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands people live safely. In other words, a Muslim, in the true sense of the word, is a person who does not harm anyone by his or her words or deeds.

Of the various names or attributes of God mentioned in the Quran one is *AsSalam*, or 'The Source of Peace'. That is to say, God is Peace. Similarly, in a *hadith* recorded in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the Prophet observed that God Himself is Peace. Moreover, God's guidance is referred to in the Quran (5:16) as *subul as-salaam* or 'the ways of peace'. According to Islam, heaven is the ideal abode for Man, and the Quran (10:25) refers to heaven as *daar us-salaam* or the 'home of peace'. Elsewhere, the Quran (56:26) says that the inhabitants of heaven will greet each other saying, 'Peace! Peace!' In other words, life in heaven will be entirely peaceful.

We are told by the Quran (4:128) that 'reconciliation is best'. This means that, in terms of consequences, reconciliation is the better option. According to the law of nature that God has devised, reconciliation leads to successes and achievements that would simply be impossible by having recourse to violence.

In a narration recorded in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Aisha, wife of the Prophet, is mentioned as having noted that whenever the Prophet had to choose between two courses of action, he would always choose the easier one. This indicates that when opportunities for peaceful activism exist, one should never give preference to violent activism: peaceful activism is the easier option, while violent activism is the harder option.

For example, for a movement to attempt to overturn the

status quo all at once is the harder option; an easier option is to avoid such an attempt, and, instead, to work within the existing boundaries. Taking recourse to violence in the event of a conflict is more arduous, while responding to the situation by seeking reconciliation through peaceful methods is far less so. Reacting to aggression with counter-aggression is always a tough proposition, while responding with patience, steadfastness and tolerance is the easier way. Protesting and stirring up people to solve a particular problem is patently difficult to do, whereas acting quietly and without any great hue and cry is an easier solution. Bringing about reform by radical means presents many problems, while adopting a gradual, step-by-step policy is by far the simpler approach. Acting in the heat of the moment with fiery passion and without stopping to consider the consequences is hardly a prudent course to adopt, while taking steps wisely after considering their likely results is a smoother path to take. To oppose existing rulers is a task fraught with much trouble and danger, while steering clear of the rulers and focusing instead on educating and guiding people is a much easier course. These instances illustrate what is meant in the above-quoted *hadith* by giving preference to easier options rather than to harder ones.

The fact is that in Islam, peace is the rule while war is the exception. The entire range of Islamic teachings and the practical life of the Prophet testify to this.

#### THE PROPHET'S MODEL

The Prophet Muhammad received his first Divine revelation in Makkah in the year 610 C.E.. The mission for which God had appointed him was to inculcate belief in *tawhid*, or the oneness of God. Now, with regard to this mission, there was a major issue that he had to deal with. And this was that the Kabah, which is in Makkah and which the Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael had built for the worship of the one God, had, in later times,

been converted into a centre for polytheism. 360 idols had been installed therein.

One might think that, given this situation, the first commandment of the Quran should have been to purify the Kabah of these idols. But ignoring this problem, the Quran's initial commandments were about the need for inner purification. Had the Prophet been ordered to purify the Kabah of idols at the very outset, at a time when the Quraysh polytheists were dominant in Makkah, it would inevitably have led to conflict and even war. Therefore, after being appointed as a prophet, the Prophet continued to pray peacefully for over a period of thirteen years at the Kabah even while scores of idols remained therein. Likewise, after he shifted to Madinah, he and his Companions performed the Umrah or 'lesser pilgrimage' to Makkah and circumambulated the Kabah following the Treaty of Hudaibiya (628 C.E.) at a time when these idols were still there.

The Prophet acted in this way so that war and confrontation with the polytheists could be avoided and peace could be maintained. The entire life of the Prophet exemplified this peace-loving policy of his. The Quraysh of Makkah were ready to attack him, but he avoided this by quietly leaving the town and shifting to Madinah. Just before the Hudaibiya Treaty, war-like conditions prevailed, but the Prophet agreed to the Quraysh's one-sided conditions and entered into a peace pact with them. Likewise, on the occasion of the Battle of the Trench (627 C.E.), a massive force of some 12,000 polytheists reached the outskirts of Madinah, challenging the Muslims to battle. However, the Prophet ordered a long trench to be dug around the town, thus establishing a buffer between the Muslims and their opponents. All this clearly indicates the great importance that the Prophet gave to peace.

Islam's mission centres on *tawhid*, the oneness of God. The purpose of Islam is to convince human beings to worship and serve only the one God. It aims to so transform people's minds

and hearts so that they love just the one God, fear Him alone and make Him their biggest concern.

A mission of this sort that invites people to the path of God simply cannot accept violent confrontation. This is because violence or war destroys the conducive atmosphere essential to any movement that seeks to reform people's thinking in order to bring about a spiritual revolution. The fact of the matter is that peaceful conditions invariably promote an atmosphere favourable to the mission of Islam. On the contrary, violent conditions cannot but produce an atmosphere inimical to Islam.

#### WAR, A STATE ACTION

In Islam, war is not the duty of members of the general public, whether individuals or groups. Rather, it is the task of a properly established government. Individuals do not have the right to engage in war on their own. On the contrary, war can be declared only by an established government. It is permissible for the government to call upon the general public to assist it in a war, but members of the public do not have the right to declare war on their own.

The Quran lays down as a general commandment that in the face of threats or where there is the danger of an external attack, the public should not take any action on their own. On such occasions, the only thing to do is take the matter to what the Quran (4:83) refers to as *ululamr*, or those in authority—in other words, their rulers. And it is for the latter to decide on an appropriate response.

The same point is made in a *hadith* mentioned in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*. According to this report, the rulers are like a shield. War is fought under their leadership, and they protect the people. This indicates that the planning and declaration of *qital*, or war, is entirely the prerogative of a properly established government. The general Muslim populace can, remaining

under the leadership of their rulers and obeying their orders, play whatever role is required of them in this regard, but they cannot act independently.

From this Islamic principle it is clear that there is no scope in Islam for non-state actors to engage in war on their own, or what is generally called guerilla war. This is because a guerilla war is fought by independent non-state organisations, rather than by agencies of an established government. If agencies of an Islamic state seek to engage in defensive war, then, in accordance with the commandments of the Quran, they must first issue an open declaration of war. If the state has a treaty with the party it wants to wage war against, it must dissolve it. In Islam, war must be openly announced. Undeclared war is not permissible in Islam. Hence, according to Islam, proxy war is illegitimate.

All actions in Islam have certain conditions. It follows, therefore, that in Islam there are also certain necessary conditions for war. One of these conditions is that war must be limited only to, and directed only against, aggressors. In other words, a Muslim army is permitted to fight only against combatants. It is not permissible for it to attack non-combatants. The Quran lays down:

He does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you on account of your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just. God only forbids you to make friends with those who have fought against you on account of your faith and driven you out of your homes or helped others to do so. Any of you who turn towards them in friendship will truly be transgressors. (60:8-9)

Suppose a Muslim government is embroiled in a war with another country. Even if this war abides by the necessary conditions for war that Islam lays down, it will still be illegitimate for Muslims to engage in any destructive activities against the citizens of the state with which the Muslim army is at war. In this

regard, the destruction wrought on 11 September, 2001 in New York and Washington is clearly and unambiguously illegitimate according to Islam.

In the same way, even in a war which according to Islam is legitimate Muslims are not permitted to engage in suicide-bombing against their opponents. Islam does not allow for people to strap bombs to their bodies and force their way into their opponents' military camps or enter civilian settlements and deliberately kill themselves in order to eliminate their opponents. This sort of action is definitely not martyrdom (*shahaadat*), and nor can it be justified by terming it a desire to attain martyrdom (*istishhaad*).

#### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ENEMY AND AGGRESSOR

God has, in His wisdom and in order to test us, given human beings free will. With this God-given free will sometimes enmity develops between people. This, at times, escalates into war. However, in Islam there is a clear distinction between enmity, on the one hand, and war, on the other.

Followers of Islam do not have the right to unleash war against whomsoever they consider to be their enemies. The only thing they can do is engage their enemies in peaceful *dawah*, that is, to invite them to God's path, not wage war on them. In this regard, the Quran clearly states:

Who speaks better than one who calls to God and does good works and says, 'I am surely of those who submit' Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend. (41:33,34)

This Quranic verse clearly tells us that we should engage in peaceful efforts and thereby make our opponent our friend,

rather than branding him as an incorrigible enemy and declaring war against him.

It is true that Islam does give permission to engage in war in some situations, but this is only when all efforts to avoid war have failed and the opposing force launches an attack, creating a situation that necessitates defensive measures. In this regard, the Quran says:

Permission to fight is granted to those who are attacked, because they have been wronged. (22:39)

In the same vein, elsewhere, the Quran, permitting Muslims to participate in war, clarifies that the opposing party is the one that attacked the Muslims first. This verse reads:

Will you not fight against those who have broken their oaths and conspired to banish the Messenger? They were the first to attack you. (9:13)

It must be clearly understood that according to Islamic teachings, war may be resorted to, not against all enemies or opponents but only against aggressors, and that, too, only if the urgent need arises. If Muslims consider some people to be their enemies or opponents, they certainly do not have permission to attack or declare war against them. With regard to such people, the one and only thing that Muslims can and should do is to engage in peaceful *dawah* work. Islam does not permit them to do anything other than this. While defensive war is permitted in Islam in the wake of violent aggression by others, this can be resorted to only when all efforts to avoid war have failed. This is very well exemplified in practical terms in the life of the Prophet Muhammad.

#### AN UNDESIRABLE ASPECT OF WAR

War, it must be understood, is completely undesirable as far as

Islam is concerned. Just as trade can prosper only in a climate of peace and moderation, so is the case with Islam. In this regard, a *hadith* contained in the *Sahih al-Bukhari* advises believers not to desire confrontation with their enemies. Rather, they should seek peace from God.

War is often fought for the sake of acquiring political power. However, in Islam political power is not something for which war should be resorted to. The Quran observes that men of faith need not make the possession of power and dominance their target, for these are actually blessings of God, conferred upon deserving believers as a reward for their faith and good deeds. Thus, the Quran states:

God has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely grant them power in the land as He granted to those who were before them (24:55)

According to the Quran, God is the Ultimate Power. It is He who gives political power to whoever He wills among human beings. Likewise, He it is who takes it away from whomever He wills. This is why the holders of power keep changing. The Quran says:

Say, 'Lord, sovereign of all sovereignty. You bestow sovereignty on whom you will and take it away from whom You please; You exalt whoever You will and abase whoever You will. All that is good lies in Your hands. You have the power to will anything. (3:26)

This Quranic truth can be expressed in a different way, as follows: Acquiring and losing political power are both governed by the law of nature. It is not that a group gets political power because of its own efforts. Nor, too, can a group lose its political power because of the conspiracy of others.



## VICTORY WITHOUT WAR

In 628 C.E., the Prophet entered into a treaty—called the Treaty of Hdaybiya—with his opponents. At this time, the Prophet was based in Madinah, while Makkah was still under the control of the polytheists, who were then at war with the Prophet and his followers. The Prophet wanted to visit Makkah in order to perform the Umrah, because the Kabah was located there. This visit would have been only for the purpose of worship. However, the Makkans made this into a prestige issue for themselves. And so, they stopped the Prophet outside Makkah, at a place called Hdaybiya, and asked him to return. Things came to such a head that war seemed imminent. At this time, the Prophet was accompanied by some 1400 Muslims. If these people had insisted on going to Makkah to perform the Umrah, war would certainly have broken out. The Prophet, however, accepted the demands of the Makkan polytheists, and, signing a ten-year peace treaty with them, returned from Hdaybiya to Madinah.

The Treaty of Hdaybiya thus averted war between the two parties, being, as it were, a withdrawal from the field of confrontation. But in the first verse of chapter 48 of the Quran described it as a ‘clear victory’ in favour of the followers of Islam. By not engaging in war with their opponents, they had won a decisive victory over them. This meant that by avoiding war and, instead, by entering into a peace pact, the followers of Islam won the opportunity to prevent their resources from being wasted in war and to use them entirely on constructive activities instead. And this is exactly what happened. History tells us that within two years of the peace pact of Hdaybiya, the followers of Islam had so well established themselves that they were in a position to be victorious over Makkah without any sort of regular fighting and by using only peaceful means.

This principle of ‘victory without war’ is undoubtedly a very important one in Islam. It is based on the immutable system of nature. It is as useful to, and relevant for, individuals and groups

as it is for governments. It can be expressed in the form of the following saying:

Avoid confrontation, and avail of the opportunities.

## WAR TO END WAR

The Quran makes the following exhortation:

Fight them until there is no more [religious] persecution, and religion belongs wholly to God: if they desist, then surely God is watching of what they do. (8:39)

This verse has two parts. Here, the same point is made, first in the form of a negation, and then as an affirmation. It means that the state of persecution or *fitna* should be put an end to in such a way that an environment entirely free of persecution is established. Or, in other words, the artificial conditions produced by human beings should be replaced by the natural condition laid down by God.

The persecution, or *fitna*, that this verse mentions relates to compulsion in religious matters, which, in ancient times, prevailed all over the world. At that time, monarchy was the norm almost everywhere. The two basic bases or loci of power were political position and ownership of land. Generally, both rested in the hands of the monarch. In this way, almost the whole sphere of human life was practically under the monarch's control. People were even compelled to follow the monarch's religion.

This sort of coercion was opposed to the natural scheme that God has devised. Because of this, a sort of political centralization prevailed throughout the world. Under this coercive system, people could hardly do anything without the monarch's consent. Ordinary people simply had no freedom whatsoever. The situation was similar to that prevailing in the Soviet Union under Communism.

God wanted this unnatural system of coercion to be ended and for the whole of human life to run according to the natural conditions that He has laid down in order to test human beings—that is to say, people should be free to do what they like without the permission of the political authorities.

In the early period of Islam, the overthrow of *mulukiyat* or monarchical despotism and its replacement by the Caliphate was the beginning of this phenomenon. This system was first established in Arabia. At that time, there were two big empires in the region—the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Empire. The establishment of the Caliphate and its programme of reform was a major challenge to these two powers. Hence, they wanted to quell this reformist movement. As a result of this, the Companions of the Prophet had to face stiff opposition from them. With God's assistance, they were victorious in this confrontation, and the coercive system of what the French historian Henri Pirenne termed as 'Absolute Imperialism' was ended.

Ending a system of coercion that was several thousand years old and replacing it with a system based on freedom was a very revolutionary development. This development could not be completed in its initial phase itself. With God's help, Islam, in the seventh century C.E., broke the historical continuity of this ancient coercive system. After this, this transformation assumed the form of an ongoing process that became central to human history. It continued, through various natural ups and downs, until in the 20th century it reached its culmination.

Decentralization emerged as a reality in the early 20th century. And so, political power has now become very limited, remaining restricted essentially to the form of administration. Today, the interference of political institutions in human life is minimal. In almost all spheres and aspects of life people are free to manage their lives as they like.

This enormous change in the system of human life is in favour of Islam. As with other people, it is now possible for the followers of Islam, too, to go ahead with their plans and activities

for moulding and building their lives without any interference, irrespective of whether or not they possess political power. The fact is that this transformation has taken us out of the age of monarchical authoritarianism and into the age of institutions.

It has now become possible for the followers of Islam to set up all sorts of institutions on a large scale to establish their influence in all spheres of life, and even to indirectly influence political institutions. Through such institutions they can gain the sort of influence in society that in an earlier age was available through the possession of political power. For instance, by setting up educational institutions they can educate and train the future generations. Through media houses, they can help shape the intellectual climate of society. Through books and scholarship, they can spread their thoughts. Through research institutions, they can promote new thinking. Through mosques and *madrasas*, they can guarantee the continuance of their religion. Through setting up industries, they can improve their economic conditions. Through modern means of communications, they can link up with others at the global level to pursue their objectives. Through NGOs, they can organize their religious and cultural affairs in a more effective way. And so on.

In the present day, communities that have discovered this reality—of the power of modern institutions—have been able to achieve impressive success despite not possessing political power. Some of them have set up their own educational empires. Others have established empires—in industry, publishing, communications, finance and medicine, and so on.

I think that one important aspect of the Quranic verse ‘and religion belongs wholly to God’ (8:39) is precisely this transformation. This transformation has reduced political power to a mere political headache. And so, it is not necessary now for the followers of Islam to wage war for the sake of capturing political power. Irrespective of who wields political power, the followers of Islam can now, under all conditions, establish non-political institutions and thereby access all the desirable benefits.

This does not mean that the followers of Islam must wash their hands off politics. Rather, it means that while gaining the benefits that accrue through institutions and organizations, they can engage in peaceful political work in a limited arena. They must abstain completely from political agitation, however, and, instead, should pursue their peaceful political journey, within the possible limits. It may be, then, that God will give them the opportunity to enter into institutions of political significance.

#### THE STRENGTH OF PEACE

A *hadith* in the *Sahih Muslim* tells us that God gives in response to gentleness what He does not in response to harshness. From this we learn that peaceful activism is clearly superior to violent activism.

What this *hadith* relates is not something mysterious. Rather, it is an obvious, well-known and natural fact. War and violence only further exacerbate hatred and enmity between opponents. They cause much destruction of resources, besides taking precious lives. They lead entire societies to fall prey to negative thinking. Obviously, in a climate of war there is no possibility left for positive and constructive activities. In war and violence, destruction is certain. They produce no benefit whatsoever.

On the other hand, in a climate of peace, people can establish propitious and balanced relations with each other. Friendship and love can flourish. As a result of this sort of favourable atmosphere, positive and constructive activities and the use of resources for progress are possible. Such an atmosphere is conducive to positive thinking, which promotes progress in terms of thought and action.

The greatest damage wrought by war is that it blocks the available opportunities. On the other hand, the greatest benefit of peace is that it opens up opportunities to the maximum possible extent. War always brings about additional destruction,

while peace inevitably leads to additional benefits. This is why Islam stresses the avoidance of war and confrontation to the maximum possible extent. It commands its followers to establish peace at all costs.

#### CLARIFICATION OF A MISUNDERSTANDING

There are some verses in the Quran about which there is considerable misunderstanding. For instance, the verse which says, 'Slay them wherever you find them' (2:191). On the basis of such verses, the impression has been formed that Islam is a religion of war. This, however, is a baseless view. Verses of this sort are restricted in their application and concern only to those people who had unilaterally launched a military attack on the followers of Islam. They are not a general Islamic commandment.

This point can be better understood if we keep in mind the fact that the Quran was not revealed all at once, in the form of a book. Rather, it was revealed in installments, over a period of 23 years, in accordance with prevailing conditions. If this period of 23 years is divided on the basis of peace and war, then some 20 years of this period were years of peace, while only around three years were a time of war. The Quranic verses about war were revealed in this three-year period. Besides these verses, the other verses, which were revealed over a period of 20 years, were all related to peaceful teachings—to matters such as intuitive knowledge of God, worship, morals, justice, and so on.

This way of categorizing the commandments of the Quran is a natural one. This sort of categorization can be done with regard to the scriptures of other religions, too. Take, for instance, the holy book of Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita. There are many teachings in the Gita that have to do with wisdom and morals. In addition, the Gita also talks about war. In the Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna to go ahead and participate in war. Now, this certainly does not mean that those who believe in the Gita will be waging war all the time. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi drew his philosophy

of non-violence from the Gita. This was possible because in the Gita, war is an exception, to be resorted to purely in exceptional circumstances. On the other hand, in ordinary or general life, it is the Gita's peaceful teachings that apply, and it was these which Mahatma Gandhi drew on to develop his philosophy of non-violence.

In the same way, in the New Testament (Matthew 10:34), Jesus is said to have declared, 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I haven't come to bring peace but a sword.' It would be wrong to assume from these words that the religion of the Messiah was one of war and bloodshed. This is because words of this sort are simply an exception in Jesus' teachings and are linked to a particular situation. As far as general life is concerned, the Messiah always stressed love and peace.

The same thing likewise, holds true of the Quran. When the Prophet Muhammad migrated from Makkah to Madinah, the polytheists launched aggressive attacks on him. But he repeatedly staved off these attacks through patient steadfastness and avoidance of fighting. However, there were occasions when there was no option left but to reply to these attacks. That is why, on such occasions the Prophet responded in the form of defensive fighting. It was in these circumstances that the exceptional Quranic commandments about fighting were revealed. These commandments were related to a temporary situation, and were not meant to be universally applied. Indeed, in the Quran (21:107) the Prophet is referred to as a 'mercy to the worlds', or *rahmatul-lilalameen*.

## NO TERRORISM IN ISLAM

According to Islam, terrorism is not permissible or legitimate under any circumstances.

Terrorism is a form of violence undertaken by non-state actors. Using violence to attaining a certain objective, if the need so arises, is the prerogative only of a duly established government.

No matter what the conditions, it is improper and impermissible for non-state actors, including both individuals and groups, to adopt violent methods. If an individual or group has grounds for complaint, there are only two legitimate courses that can be adopted. One is to seek to resolve the problem using peaceful means. The other is to leave the matter with the courts or the government so that it can be solved according to the law.

Today, the media often uses the term 'Islamic terrorism'. This term is definitely wrong, because Islam has no link with terrorism. The actual culprit in this regard is not the media, however, but, rather, those Muslims who give the media the opportunity to report their actions as exemplifying what the media choose to characterize them as.

These days, Muslim non-state actors have triggered off violent conflicts and wars in various parts of the world. It is beyond dispute that all these wars are about Muslim worldly concerns—conflicts for the sake of power and pelf or Muslim communal or national interests. But the Muslims who are behind these violent movements have given them the name of 'Islamic jihad'. Now, obviously, the task of the media is to report events and analyze the reasons behind them. The media then attributes these violent activities to Islam in precisely the same manner as many Muslims themselves do. Obviously, when these Muslims give their own violence an 'Islamic' label, the media, too, will do the same. The media cannot be expected to call it by some other name.

Today, this conduct on the part of Muslims has given Islam a bad name. As a result, the image of Islam across the world has been greatly distorted, with Islam, contrary to reality, now coming to be thought of as a religion of hatred and violence, not as a religion of peace and humanity.

There is only one way in which Islam can be rid of this bad image: and that is if Muslims stop giving their communal or national conflicts an 'Islamic' label. They must attribute all their actions to their community, not to Islam, so that whatever they do can be seen for what it truly is—actions linked to their community, and not Islamic or religious actions as such.



## CHAPTER TWO

# *The Concept of Jihad in Islam*



The word jihad is derived from the root *jahada*, which means ‘to strive’ or ‘to struggle’. It denotes the exertion of oneself to the utmost, to the limits of one’s capacity, in some activity or for some purpose. Thus, the Quran says ‘And strive for the cause of God as it behoves you to strive for it.’ (22:78)

In the Arabic language the word ‘jihad’ refers to making an all-out effort for something. Because fighting one’s enemies is also one form of such effort or striving, it is also referred to as a jihad, in an expanded sense. However, the actual Arabic word for this is *qital*, and not jihad.

Fighting with one’s enemies is something that might happen by chance, and only occasionally. However, jihad is a continuous process that animates every day and night of the life of the true believer. It never ceases. This continuous jihad is the ceaseless effort a believer makes at every moment to abide by God’s will in every aspect of his life. Such a person does not let any negative elements affect his life, such as the desires of the self, the allure of gain and personal aggrandisement, the promptings of opportunism, the problems of the ego, the lust for wealth, and so on. All such things, and even the pressure of traditions and

customs, are hurdles in God's path. Overcoming them all and abiding by the commandments of God is the real jihad, and this is what jihad's essential meaning is.

There are many references to jihad in the sayings attributed to the Prophet. For instance, in the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad, there are several traditions, such as:

1. A *mujahid* is he who engages in jihad against his own self (*nafs*) for God's sake. (6/20)
2. A *mujahid* is he who engages in jihad against his own self in God's path. (6/22)
3. A *mujahid* is he who engages in jihad against his own self for the sake of obedience to God. (6/22)

The world we live in is a testing ground. It has been fashioned in such a way that human beings are constantly in a state of being tested. In the course of this test, people have to face numerous hurdles. So, for instance, you might face a situation where you are faced with a truth, but you feel that acknowledging it would lower your status. You might have in your possession a thing that belongs to someone else and you feel that returning it to its rightful owner would cause you a loss. Or, you might feel that leading a modest life is tantamount to suppressing your desires. At times, you might think that not giving vent to feelings of anger and revenge is tantamount to negating yourself. You might hesitate to uphold justice for fear of losing your popularity. You might feel that if you act in a principled manner, instead of selfishly, you may lose certain facilities. And so on.

In this way, on different occasions one has to repeatedly suppress one's desires. Sometimes, you might feel that you will have to sacrifice your ego totally, surmounting all hurdles and facing all sorts of difficulties and losses, but still remaining firmly established on the Truth. This is the real jihad. Those who remain steadfast in this jihad will be given the right to enter paradise in the Hereafter.

Jihad, in essence, is a form of peaceful struggle. One form of this peaceful struggle is *dawah*, inviting people to tread the path of God. *Dawah* is communicating to others the word of God (25:52). The jihad that this Quranic verse refers to is not military warfare. Rather, it connotes a wholly intellectual and ideological process. In short, it means refuting falsehood and affirming the Truth.

Jihad in the form of *qital* or war in its primary sense is also another name for peaceful struggle. That is to say, if an enemy challenges one militarily, even then, to begin with, one should still strive, to the utmost possible extent, to respond through peaceful means. Peaceful methods should be abandoned only when it is no longer possible to use them, when fighting remains the only possible option left to respond to the war initiated by others.

In this regard, a statement recorded in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, and attributed to Aisha, wife of the Prophet, serves as a guiding principle for us. According to this report, whenever the Prophet was faced with two possible courses of action, he would always opt for the easier one.

This practice, or *sunnat*, of the Prophet applies not only to the routine affairs of life but also to serious matters such as war, which by their very nature present difficult options. A study of the life of the Prophet reveals that he never initiated fighting himself. And, whenever his opponents sought to entangle him in fighting, he would always seek some way to avoid it and stave off war. He engaged in war only when there was no other way left at all. Thus, according to the Prophet's *sunnat*, aggressive war is forbidden in Islam. Islam allows only for defensive war, and that, too, only when it becomes absolutely unavoidable.

In life, one is often faced with the issue of having to choose between two paths to follow: the peaceful and the violent. The accounts of the Prophet's life tell us that always, and in every matter, he adopted peaceful methods, totally shunning violence.

His whole life was a successful expression of this principle. Here are some instances which illustrate this:

1. Immediately after being appointed as a prophet, he was faced with choosing between two methods—peaceful or violent. As a prophet, his mission was to end polytheism and to establish *tawhid*, faith in and surrender to the one God. The Kabah in Makkah had been established as a centre of *tawhid*, but by the time of the advent of the Prophet some 360 idols had been installed therein. Hence, one could think that in the Quran the Prophet should first have been instructed to purify the Kabah of idols and then remake it as a centre of *tawhid*, thus advancing the mission he was engaged in. But had this been the case and he had started his work in this way, it would have been tantamount to warring with the Quraysh of Makkah, who enjoyed leadership among the Arabs, precisely because they had traditionally been the custodians of the Kabah. History tells us that at this stage, the Prophet completely avoided cleansing the Kabah of idols, and restricted himself purely to the mission of conveying the ideology of *tawhid* instead. This was an example of the Prophet choosing a peaceful method over a violent one.
2. Firmly upholding this peaceful principle, the Prophet carried on his preaching work for thirteen years in Makkah. Yet, despite this, the Quraysh fiercely opposed him, so much so that their elders, after consulting each other, plotted to act together to kill him. Accordingly, they armed themselves with swords and surrounded his house.

This, in effect, was a challenge to the Prophet and his Companions to do battle. However, based on God's guidance, the Prophet decided to avoid armed confrontation. And so, in the silence of the night, he left Makkah and travelled in secret till

he reached Madinah. This journey is known in Islamic history as the *Hijrah*. The *Hijrah* clearly exemplifies the choice of a peaceful method as opposed to a violent one.

3. The 'Battle of the Trench', also known as the Battle of Ahzab, is another illustration of this *sunnat* of the Prophet. On this occasion, a vast number of the Prophet's opponents assembled and marched towards Madinah. This was an open challenge to war on their part. However, in order to avoid war, the Prophet arranged for a trench to be dug around the town. This served as a buffer against the attackers. And so, the Quraysh army, having spent just a few days on the other side of the trench, retreated. The trench, too, was, as it were, an example of the Prophet's choosing a peaceful option as opposed to a violent one.
4. Likewise, the Treaty of Hudaibiya also exemplifies this *sunnat* of the Prophet. The Prophet and his Companions wanted to enter Makkah and perform the Umrah, but they were stopped by the chiefs of the Quraysh at a place called Hudaibiya and were told to go back to Madinah. The Quraysh said that they would not allow them to enter Makkah at any cost. On their part, this was, as it were, a challenge to do battle. If the Prophet had proceeded towards Makkah in accordance with his plan of performing the Umrah, it was certain that armed confrontation with the Quraysh would have broken out. However, the Prophet ended his journey at Hudaibiya. Accepting the one-sided conditions of the Quraysh, he entered into a peace treaty with them and returned to Madinah. This is yet another clear prophetic example of choosing a peaceful method over a violent one.
5. This *sunnat* of the Prophet was also exemplified by his victory over Makkah. On this occasion, he was accompanied by 10,000 devoted Companions. They could certainly have successfully fought the Quraysh.

However, instead of using force, the Prophet chose rather to demonstrate force. He did not set out by making an announcement, with this army of 10,000 people, and then fight the Quraysh and capture Makkah. Instead, what he did was that in complete secrecy he made preparations for the journey and travelled along with his Companions to Makkah and then very silently entered the town. His entry into Makkah was so sudden that the Quraysh were unable to make any preparations against him, and Makkah was won without any bloody confrontation. This, too, is an example of the Prophet's choice of a peaceful, over a violent, method.

All these examples prove that not only in ordinary conditions, but also in case of extreme emergency, the Prophet adopted the principle of peace as opposed to war. All his successes are practical examples of this very *sunnat* of peace.

As indicated above, in Islam peace is the general rule while war is a rare exception, to be resorted to only when it becomes an absolutely unavoidable compulsion. Keep this principle in mind and survey the world today. Today's world is completely different from the world of ancient times. In the past, violence was a common or general practice. Choosing peaceful methods was, at that time, an extremely difficult thing to do. However, today the situation has changed completely. In today's world, resorting to violence has become completely undesirable and unacceptable. In contrast, peaceful methods are now regarded as the only acceptable way. Moreover, today, peaceful methods not only have an intellectual base but are supported by practical requirements, which makes these methods extremely powerful in their own right.

These supports are very many—for instance, the right to express one's views, the possibilities of widely disseminating one's views using modern means of communications, and employing the power of the media in one's favour. And so on. These modern

transformations have made peaceful methods popular, and, at the same time, more effective.

As mentioned earlier, according to the Prophet's *sunnat*, or practice, when peaceful methods are practically available, these methods alone must be used and violent struggle should be avoided. One can very well say, without fear of exaggeration, that today, violent methods have not only become difficult, but that they are also, in practical terms, completely counter-productive. In contrast, peaceful methods are easier to adopt and also much more likely to be successful. No longer is the use of peaceful methods a question of choosing between two possible options—peaceful versus violent. Rather, the peaceful method is now simply the only possible and viable existing option. And so, it is absolutely correct to say that violent methods must now be abandoned in practice, or what in the language of the *shariah* is called *mansukh* or 'abrogated'. Now the followers of Islam are left with only one method to choose—and that, without any doubt whatsoever, is the peaceful method, unless and until such changes take place in the situation as once again change social imperatives.

It is true that in the past violent methods were used on some occasions, but these were only a choice based on the compulsions of the then prevailing causes and conditions. As a result of the changes in the conditions in our times, there is no longer such compulsion, so the choice of violent methods must now be considered to be unnecessary and not in consonance with the essential spirit of the Prophet's *sunnat*. Now, with the new conditions, only peaceful methods should be chosen. As far as the issue of jihad is concerned, peace is the general rule or norm, while war as a necessity is a very rare exception.

An example from recent times of what we have been discussing here, and from which we can gain valuable lessons, is the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Because of the changes in the times that we have talked of, it was possible for Mahatma Gandhi to engage in a full-fledged political struggle and succeed. And all of this

happened by adhering to non-violent methods and peaceful activism, from start to finish.

According to a well-known principle of *fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence, certain rules can or should be modified to suit the change of time and place. This generally accepted principle of *fiqh* demands that when the conditions have changed, then, if need be, one must seek the re-application of the relevant *shariah* commandments so that they may be brought into harmony with the prevailing conditions. Indeed, this principle of *fiqh* applies as much to issues of war as it does to many other matters. It, too, demands that violent methods should now be discarded and only peaceful methods should be considered to be in conformity with the *shariah*.

#### CONTEMPORARY JIHADI MOVEMENTS

In present times, in many countries Muslims are engaged in armed conflicts in the name of 'Islamic jihad'. But the fact is that no movement can turn into a jihad simply because its flag-bearers give it that label. An action can be considered an Islamic jihad only if and when it is fully in accordance with the conditions that Islam has laid down in this regard. Without fully meeting these conditions, it will not be a real jihad, but, rather, *fasad*, or strife. Those who are engaged in such actions will not earn the rewards they would have had for participating in a true jihad. Rather, they will deserve only God's punishment.

I have discussed in considerable detail in several of my books the various conditions necessary for jihad in the sense of *qital* or physical war. Here I wish to clarify just one point. And that is, that the status of jihad in the sense of *qital* is not the same as that of actions performed by individuals such as prayer and fasting. Rather, it is such an action as has wholly to do with the government.

This status of jihad in the sense of *qital* is clearly evident in



the Quran and *Hadith*. For instance, the Quran (4:83) tells us that if a state of fear is created by an enemy, one should not initiate action against it on one's own. Rather, one should turn to those who are in authority—that is, those who have governmental powers. The latter should accurately gauge the situation and take proper and necessary steps. This verse tells us that in the event of fear (a situation of war), it is not legitimate for members of the general public to take steps on their own. The only thing they can do is to leave the matter with the rulers and assist the latter in whatever actions they may take.

Likewise, according to a *hadith* in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the Prophet is said to have declared that the leader is a shield. War is undertaken under his leadership, and protection is secured through him. This indicates that military defense must always be conducted under the ruler's leadership. The only duty of the general Muslim public in this regard is that they should obey their rulers, and, giving them their support, should help them succeed in their efforts.

This *fiqh* issue is one on which there is unanimity among the *fuqaha*, or scholars of Muslim jurisprudence. Almost no Islamic jurist of note has any differences with it. According to the unanimous agreement of the *fuqaha*, only an established government can declare war. Or, as it is said in Arabic, *arraheelu lil imam*, meaning that the declaration of war is the sole prerogative of the ruler. Non-governmental actors do not have the right to make such a declaration.

War is something that needs considerable organization. Only a sovereign government is capable of dealing with its complexities. It is because of this that it is legitimate only for a government to declare war, and not the general public.

In present times, Muslims have launched violent confrontations with governments in various countries. But almost wholly without exception, these are not Islamic jihads, but, rather *fasad*, or conflict. This is because none of these so-called jihads has been launched by an established government.

All of these movements have been launched, and are being carried out, by what in today's parlance are called non-governmental organizations. If some of their so-called *jihadi* activities enjoy the support of some Muslim government, this support is being provided in a clandestine and undeclared manner. However, according to the *shariah*, a Muslim government has the right to engage in jihad only when it openly declares this. It is impermissible, according to Islam, for a Muslim government to engage in *qital*, or war, without such a declaration.

The violent activities presently engaged in by Muslims in various parts of the world in the name of jihad are, to use modern-day terms, of two types: guerilla war and proxy war. And both of these types of war are, without any doubt, illegitimate in Islam. Guerilla war is illegitimate in Islam because it is conducted by non-state actors, and not an established government. And proxy war is illegitimate because it is engaged in by a government without its having made an open declaration of hostilities.

Islamic jihad is thus a positive and continuous action or process. It continues uninterrupted in the life of a believer and has three large spheres:

1. *Jihad an-Nafs*: This is the struggle to control one's negative emotions and desires, and under all conditions, remain always firm in the way of life that is pleasing to God.
2. *Jihade Dawah*: This is the struggle to convey the message of God to all of humankind, and for this purpose to make every effort, inspired by compassion and concern for the welfare of all. This is an exalted task, and so the Quran calls it *jihade-kabir*, or 'great jihad'.
3. *Jihade A'ada*: This is the effort to preserve the True Religion under all circumstances. In the past, this jihad was basically a peaceful action, and it remains so now as well.

Accordingly, then, jihad is a peaceful struggle, and not a violent one.

## CHAPTER THREE

# *The Culture of Peace*



### WHAT IS PEACE?

Some scholars define peace as the absence of war. This definition is, from the dictionary or literal point of view, correct. Whenever there is no war or violence between individuals or groups, a state of peace begins to prevail on its own.

However, for peace to be established in any society, the ending of violence or war is not enough. To define peace as the absence of violence or war is a negative definition. A positive way of defining peace is on the basis of the positive attributes that characterize peace. Accordingly, a society can be said to enjoy peace if positive and constructive thought and activity flourish at all levels. When such thought and activity flourish, a society can truly be said to enjoy peace.

The establishment of peace in a society can be likened to the lifting of the gates of a dam, leading to a river being filled with water in plenty. Life is like a flowing river that seeks to surge ahead, driven by its own inner force. It stops its journey only when some artificial barrier is placed in its path. In the absence of such a barrier, life flourishes in all its dimensions, impelled by nature.

Violence and war are barriers that seek to block the natural

flow of life. In contrast, peace opens up all the closed doors that seek to impede life's onward journey.

We often talk of peace in the context of war. But this is a very narrow and restricted notion of peace. The fact is that peace is deeply linked with the whole of human life. Peace is a complete ideology in itself. It is the master-key that opens the doors to all kinds of success. Peace creates a favourable atmosphere for success in every sort of endeavour. Without peace, no positive action—small or big—is at all possible.

#### PEACE IS THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSE

The Quran tells us:

The sun cannot overtake the moon, nor can the night outpace the day; each floats in [its own] orbit. (36:40)

Referring to an astronomical phenomenon, this Quranic verse tells us about the principle on which the system of the entire universe is based. And this is the principle of peace. There are innumerable entities in the cosmos, and all of them are in constant motion. Yet, they do not clash with each other. Every entity in the cosmos carries on doing its own work in its own orbit. None interferes in the sphere of the others. That is why they never clash with each other.

This 'culture of peace' is also what human beings should imbibe. They should base their lives on precisely the same universal principle that governs the rest of the cosmos. This means they must abandon the path of violence and confrontation and tread the path of peace.

The culture of the cosmos is a 'culture of peace'. It is because of this peace that the cosmos has been functioning for millions of years and yet has not witnessed any confrontation that could have impaired its functioning. If a 'culture of violence' had

informed the cosmos, by now it would have been devastated, and there would have been no possibility for human life to exist.

The same Creator who made the rest of the cosmos created us human beings, too. The Creator wants human beings to adopt the very same 'peace culture' that He has established throughout the rest of the vast cosmos. The only difference is that this 'peace culture' prevails in the rest of the cosmos on the basis of nature, while humans are independent creatures and have free will. And so, God wishes that they should freely decide to adopt this 'peace culture' in their lives.

#### THE QURAN, A BOOK OF PEACE

The Quran is, without doubt, a book of peace. It is not a book of violence and war. All the statements of the Quran are, directly or indirectly, related to peace. The very first phrase in the Quran is: 'In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.' In other words, the highest attribute of the God who has sent this Book is mercy, and this Book is an expression of this attribute of His mercy.

All the verses of the Quran are, directly or indirectly, based on peace. There are more than 6000 verses in the Quran. Of these, hardly 40 are about commandments of *qital* or war—in other words, less than 1 per cent. .

Those who regard the Quran as God's Book can be considered to be true believers only when, abiding by the teachings of the Quran, they become fully and completely peace-loving. On no condition whatsoever should they take to the path of violence.

In this regard, one needs to stress the need for people to distinguish between Islam, on the one hand, and Muslims, on the other. They must not label the actions or behaviour of Muslims as 'Islamic'. The fact is that the behavior of Muslims must be judged on the basis of Islam. Islam should not be sought to be understood on the basis of the Muslims' behaviour. Islam is an

ideology. A person can be truly considered to be a Muslim only if he follows the teachings of Islam. Those who do not follow Islamic teachings do not have anything to do with Islam, even if they claim to be its champions.

#### PEACE VERSUS VIOLENCE

Peace results from well-planned effort or action, while violence is a passion-driven, aggressive action. A peace-loving person first thinks and then acts. In contrast, a violence-loving person first acts and then thinks. Peaceful action is based on hope, in the beginning as well as at the end, while violent action is based on false hope in the beginning and frustration in the end.

A peace-loving person is well-grounded in truth. A violence-loving person stands on falsehood. Peace and positive constructive work go hand-in-hand, while violence is wholly destructive. A peace-loving person lives in the love of others, while a violence-loving person lives in the hatred of others. Peace ends in success, and violence in utter failure. Peaceful action abides by the law, while violent action is lawless.

A peace-loving person overlooks problems and takes advantage of the available opportunities, while a violence-loving person ignores the available opportunities and gets entangled in a pointless battle with problems. The path of peace cultivates a garden bursting with flowers, while the path of violence creates a thorny jungle of hatred and enmity.

In peace, one fulfills the obligations one owes to God as well as those one owes to God's creatures, including other human beings. Violence, on the other hand, is a violation of the 'rights of God' as well as the rights of people. If peace is heaven, then violence, in comparison, is sheer hell. Choosing peace is making the right choice. On the other hand, if one chooses war, it proves that he has failed in the test of making a correct choice.

In this world, there are many things that are not desirable,

but they exist for the purpose of testing us—for instance, alcohol. Alcohol exists not so that people should drink it, but, rather, so that they should avoid it and thereby prove that they can distinguish between good and bad. The same thing holds for war, too. War is something that can be resorted to, but the right thing for human beings to do is to desist from it.

In the ancient past, considering the then prevailing conditions, permission was given for defensive war. This permission was in accordance with the law of necessity. But now, in the changed conditions of today, this necessity no longer exists. And that is why there is now no need at all for war.

#### RECONCILIATION IS BEST

The Quran describes a particular natural law in the following words: ‘reconciliation is best’ (4:128). In the event of a conflict between two parties, they can engage in violent confrontation. But there is another method they can choose: to immediately come to an agreement and end their conflict. This is what reconciliation is about.

It is very rare for this sort of reconciliation to be equally in accordance with the desires of both parties. In most cases, this reconciliation happens on a unilateral basis. That is to say, one of the two parties sets aside its desires and agrees to settle the dispute according to the desires of the other party.

Why is this sort of unilateral reconciliation taken to be ‘best’? The reason for this is because a situation of conflict calls a halt to constructive activity. The benefit of agreeing to reconciliation is that one is thereby spared the need to waste one’s time, strength and resources on useless confrontation and so can focus on constructive efforts instead. A course of action that is opposed to reconciliation is always and inevitably a course leading to destruction. The method of reconciliation is always, and in every case, a beneficial one.

History is witness to the fact that whenever anyone has attained any success, it has only been after adopting the method of reconciliation. Not a single person has ever achieved any real success through confrontation and fighting. The importance of reconciliation lies in the fact that it provides an opportunity to fully exercise one's right to use the available opportunities. On the other hand, the path of confrontation leads one to waste one's energies in trying to destroy others, as a result of which one can engage in no constructive work whatsoever. The secret of success lies in stabilising oneself and building oneself up, and definitely not in the destruction of hypothetical enemies.

#### NO TO 'CORRUPTION IN THE LAND'

The Quran describes a certain form of behavior in the following words:

When they are told, 'Do not cause corruption in the land,' they say, 'We are only promoters of peace.' (2:11)

This Quranic verse refers to people who, on the face of it, are engaged in some reformist effort but whose method is not proper. Their method is such that, in actual practice, it causes *fasad*, or strife. Here, 'corruption in the land' means that as a result of their methods, people start clashing with each other. Their methods lead to stirring up hatred between people, weakening their moral sensibilities and engendering negative thinking. All these are forms of 'corruption in the land' to which this Quranic verse refers, because they destroy social peace, leading to violence and confrontation.

From this Quranic teaching we learn that for an action to be considered proper, it is not enough that it appears to be started for a good cause. In addition to this, it is necessary to keep in mind what sorts of results are produced by activities undertaken in the name of reform. If these activities give rise to hatred, tension and



violence among people, then, despite claiming to be reformist activities they are definitely not so. Rather, they are destructive activities, leading to strife. Those who engage in such activities should be considered criminals and enemies of humanity, and certainly not reformers or servants of humanity.

An action can be considered a genuine reformist effort only if it is carried out within the limits of peace and humaneness. All activities undertaken in the name of reform that disturb social peace and cause loss of life and property are wrong. Essentially, efforts in the name of reform must also truly bring about reform in terms of their results. If, instead, they result in what the Quran refers to as *fasad* or strife corruption, then they are actually themselves a form of *fasad*, no matter what seemingly beautiful words may be used to describe them.

#### ENDING CONSPIRACIES

The Quran tells us, 'If you persevere and fear God, their designs will never harm you in the least' (3:120). This Quranic verse indicates a very important fact of life. And that is, that the real issue for individuals or groups is not of whether they might have enemies who are conspiring against them. Rather, it is whether or not they have sufficient *sabr* or patience and have adopted the necessary precautionary measures to cause any conspiracies against them to fail.

If conspiracies can be likened to the rain, patience and God-consciousness are like a strong roof. Rain is a problem only for those who have not bothered to make a firm roof over their house. For those who have made such a roof, this is not the case.

This world runs on the principle of competition. That is why it is but natural that sometimes rivalries develop between individuals and groups, which may later assume the form of conspiracies against each other. Whenever something like this happens, one should consider it not as an enemy's conspiracy

but, rather, an expression of the law of nature. Thinking of the act as an enemy's conspiracy inculcates a violent approach. In contrast, if one takes it to be a result of the laws of nature, one will nurture a way of thinking that can lead one to take wise measures to avoid falling prey to such conspiracies—just as a wise man does not demonstrate against the rain, but, rather, builds a roof over his house to save himself from getting wet.

## NO EXTREMISM

The Quran tells us:

Do not go to extremes in your religion. (4:171)

The same point is made in a *hadith*, according to which the Prophet declared, 'You should restrain yourselves from committing excesses (*ghulu*) in religion. The previous communities were destroyed due to their having gone to extremes in religion.' This *hadith* is recorded in the collections of al-Nasai and Ibn Majah, and in the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad.

Extremism in every matter is wrong. It is the very antithesis of the essential spirit of religion. *Ghulu* can easily escalate into violence and confrontation. Those who have fallen prey to the psychological malady of *ghulu* refuse to accept moderation. They regard peace and moderation as being less than ideal, and that is why they are very easily attracted to violence. And it is always in the name of attaining their goal that they take to violent methods.

The opposite of *ghulu* or extremism is moderation. If you are moderate in your thinking, you will think in terms of peace. You will use only peaceful means in all you do. Moderation and peace are closely interlinked. Where there is moderation, there will also be peace. Likewise, where there is peace, there will be moderation.

In contrast, the *ghulu*-psyche always leads one towards extremism. And extremism very easily turns into violence and

confrontation. *Ghulu* and violence are thus closely interlinked. This is why *ghulu* is looked at with great disfavour in Islam. Inclining towards *ghulu* is another name for addiction to violence. And abstaining from *ghulu* is another name for cherishing moderation.

#### KILLING A SINGLE PERSON IS TANTAMOUNT TO SLAYING THE WHOLE OF HUMANITY

The Quran tells us:

‘[W]hoever killed a human being – except as a punishment for murder or for spreading corruption in the land – shall be regarded as having killed all mankind’ (5:32)

Killing someone is a very heinous act. It is legitimate only if someone becomes a definite danger to social peace. To kill someone without genuine justification is tantamount to the slaughter of the whole of humanity, because such an action is a gross violation of respect for life, which, in turn, leads to the taking of human life becoming a seemingly easy affair.

With regard to the consumption of alcohol, there is a tradition of the Prophet which tells us that if a large quantity of something leads to intoxication, then a small quantity of it, too, is forbidden. The same principle applies in the case of killing as well. It is as reprehensible and enormous a crime to kill a single person as it is to kill a large number of people. The only difference between the two is of degree, but in terms of the nature of the act itself there is no difference whatsoever.

From the Quranic verse quoted earlier one can gauge the great importance that Islam gives to peace and security. Islam demands that if a single person is killed, the entire society must react as if it is not a single individual, but, rather, the whole of humanity, that has been slain.

## DOUSING THE FIRES OF VIOLENCE

The Quran tells us:

Whenever they kindle the fire of war, God puts it out.  
(5:64)

From this Quranic verse we learn something about God's creation plan. We learn that this plan is based on the principle of peace. We learn that if someone is bent on kindling the fires of violence, we should try to put out the flames through peaceful measures so that the fire does not spread. It should never be that one party throws bombs and the other party retaliates in the same way. This is definitely not the proper way to react. The right way to respond is that if someone plants a bomb, you must defuse it.

The above-quoted Quranic verse indicates that throwing a bomb in retaliation for a bomb thrown by someone else is not the way that God wants us to behave. God wants us to respond in situations like this by seeking to defuse bombs and render them ineffective at the very outset itself, so as to prevent the disruption of peace.

It is natural that one will inevitably face various unfavourable conditions in society. No human society has ever been free of these. The solution to this problem is not to try to eliminate these conditions. Rather, their real solution is that we must make sure that we do not add an additional, undesirable condition to the already existing ones. We must not add one more bomb to the existing number of bombs. In this way, we can help prevent unfavourable conditions from further worsening. And, in this way, we can solve them. This is the real and effective solution to the problem. There is no other possible solution.

## STRIFE AFTER REFORM

The Quran tells us:

Do not corrupt the land after it has been set in order.  
This is for your own good, if you are true believers. (7:85)

This Quranic verse indicates a fact of nature—that this world has been created perfectly. Here, everything has been made according to the plan desirable for it. This means that humans should act in a balanced way in this world, without distorting the balanced pattern of nature. If we distort this plan of nature, it will lead to chaos.

Innumerable processes are at work in the world, all in accordance with nature's equilibrium. The earth moves in its orbit and revolves non-stop. The sun continues to pour its light on the world. The winds blow, the rains come, the rivers flow, the plants and trees grow, and so on. Innumerable processes like these carry on without any interruption, day and night, all of them in a perfectly peaceful manner, with no violence or confrontation whatsoever.

This is the plan of nature, and human beings should live according to it. Hence, we must completely abstain from violence and lead our lives entirely on the basis of the principle of peace. Those who behave to the contrary engage in what is termed in the Quran as *fasad* or corruption. They are definitely not engaged in promoting reform.

#### AVOIDANCE, NOT CONFRONTATION

The Quran instructs us, 'Avoid the ignorant'. (7:199)

The opposite of avoidance is confrontation. The method of avoidance keeps one within peaceful sphere, while the method of confrontation leads to violence with others.

No one—whether individuals or groups—lives alone in this world. People live in proximity to many others, each of whom has his own objectives and separate agendas. It is because of this

that people and groups repeatedly come into confrontation and conflict with each other.

There are two ways to respond to this situation: avoidance of conflict, on the one hand, and confrontation, on the other. There is simply no third option. If one chooses the path of confrontation, it will only result in fighting. The whole of human history testifies to the fact that fighting only enables one to give vent to one's pent-up emotions and that it brings no real benefit at all. Hence, one must abstain from, and consciously avoid, confrontation. This sort of avoidance not only saves one from further harm but also gives one the opportunity to carry on in the journey of progress without being stopped by any hurdles that may come one's way. Such avoidance may seem like timidity in the face of an opposing party, but its purpose is actually to save oneself from useless confrontation and to carry on with one's journey free from obstruction.

#### PATIENCE, THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

The Quran instructs us:

Have patience: God is with those who are patient. (8:46)

According to a *hadith* contained in the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad, the Prophet is said to have declared that it is greatly beneficial to exercise patience in the face of things we do not like. Success goes along with patience. Along with difficulty, the Prophet added, there is ease.

It often happens that when people are faced with a difficult situation or when they undergo a bitter experience, they get worked up. In some cases, they may even take to violence. But this sort of reaction is a result of being unaware of the laws of nature. The fact is that the laws of nature always support those who are firmly established in truth and justice. Such individuals

and groups, if they act with patience and not in haste, will inevitably be successful. Success will inevitably come to them.

In most cases, those who fail are those who act hastily and who engage in emotionally-driven actions before their appropriate time. On the other hand, those who are patient always succeed.

According to the Quran (46:35), the opposite of patience is haste. A person who behaves in a patient manner follows the creation plan of God. In contrast, someone who deviates from the creation plan can be sure that it will be impossible for him to succeed.

#### AVOID CONFLICT

The Quran tells us:

Let them not dispute with you on this matter. Call them to the path of your Lord. (22:67)

From this Quranic verse we learn that not disputing with someone means not giving the other person the chance to dispute. That is to say, whenever differences arise between two parties, they should keep them within the limits of peaceful dialogue. They must never let these differences go beyond their initial limits and turn into a violent conflict.

In this world, tensions constantly arise on various grounds between individuals and groups. In itself, this sort of tension is something quite natural. It happens everywhere, and under all sorts of conditions. The real thing to consider here is that we should make sure that these tensions or differences do not get out of hand. If differences are not to create friction, they must remain within their limits. When differences turn into physical confrontation or violence, they transgress their limits. No differences are in themselves wrong if they remain within their limits. But when they go beyond this point, they become unacceptable.

The above-quoted Quranic verse tells us something about how a person inspired by a worthy and positive purpose in life conducts himself. For such a person to succeed, the only thing that should be a matter of discussion with others is his purpose. For anything else to become a matter of discussion between him and others is for him tantamount to poison.

Now, the question arises as to how such a person, who is motivated by a positive purpose in life, can establish a friction-free atmosphere in his relationship with others. The answer is that this is possible only by his exercise of patience in a unilateral manner. In practical terms, there is simply no other way. A person with a purpose in life adopts a policy of unilateral avoidance of confrontation, through which he is able to establish a balanced atmosphere in his relationships with others so that his journey continues uninterrupted.

#### WAR ONLY FOR DEFENSE

The Quran tells us:

Permission to fight is granted to those who are attacked,  
because they have been wronged (22:39)

This Quranic verse teaches us an important principle that also relates to inter-community and international relations. And that is that the only legitimate war is one that is fought in defense, in response to clear aggression. All other forms of war are forms of *zulm*, or oppression, and oppressors have no place in God's world. As this Quranic verse indicates, wars other than those that are defensive have no justification whatsoever.

War is something truly despicable. According to the eternal law of nature, peace is the general rule or norm, while war is an exception. War can be resorted to only under extreme necessity—in order to protect oneself, and that, too, only when all possible



peaceful ways to avoid confrontation have been sincerely tried and have failed.

#### THE PATH OF PATIENCE WINS GOD'S HELP

The Quran instructs us:

Have patience: God is with those who are patient. (8:46)

The path of patience can also be called the path of peace. The opposite of the path of patience is the path of violence. The above-quoted Quranic verse refers to a natural law—that those who walk on the path of peace will find that at every step natural factors support them. On the other hand, those who adopt violence are not supported by the laws of nature — and for such people there is nothing in this world but failure and destruction.

What does walking on the path of patience mean? It means that in the face of difficult or unfavourable conditions and situations, a person does not lose his tolerance, and so his positive thinking remains unimpaired. He distinguishes the possible from the impossible, and begins his journey from what he knows to be possible. He does not hanker after immediate results. Rather, he adopts the gradual way. He does not lose heart in the face of loss. Instead, he keeps walking ahead with the future in mind. He accepts what the present gives him. As for what he might receive in the future, he adopts a wait-and-see approach. He keeps his desires subservient to the laws of nature, rather than trying to subordinate the laws of nature to his desires. Patience is thus a completely positive action, and not a passive or negative reaction.

#### TURNING YOUR ENEMY INTO YOUR FRIEND

The Quran tells us:

Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what

is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend. (41:34)

This Quranic verse tells us about one of nature's secrets—and that is that inside every human 'enemy' there is a friend, and that we should discover this hidden potential friend. Once we do this, a veritable miracle will occur. The person who earlier appeared to us as our inveterate foe will turn into our close friend.

The fact is that enmity is not something natural or intrinsic. Rather, it is an artificial reaction. Whenever, for whatever reason, someone appears to become your enemy, you should not react in the same hostile way towards him. Rather, you must respond by trying to behave in a good, kindly way with him, even if you have to do this one-sidedly and despite the hostile behaviour of your imaginary foe.

This unilateral good behaviour on your part will dampen your opponent's negative emotions. It will kindle the flame of humanity that slumbers deep in his heart. It will make him a new person, or, in the Quran's words, your 'dearest friend'.

The truth is that every human being is born with a common nature. Our common human nature is what unites 'enemies' and 'friends'. This means that you share the same basic human nature as your supposed enemy. That is why, despite your grievances, you must search for this commonality between you and your opponent.

Hope from others what you hope from yourself.

#### A RESULT OF OUR OWN ACTIONS

The Quran tells us:

Whatever misfortune befalls you is of your own doing  
(42:30)

This Quranic verse describes a fundamental fact—that this world is based on the principle of causality. As the cause is, so

the result will be. This verse teaches us that whenever we face any misfortune, we should discover its cause inside our own selves, and not start searching for it outside ourselves.

If a person realizes this fundamental truth and remains deeply aware of it, he will never blame others for his woes and start inflicting violence on them. Instead, the only thing that he will do is to engage in an unconditional survey of his own life. He will discover his own mistakes, so that by rectifying them he can save himself from further problems. To blame others for one's problems is like a sick man blaming his neighbour for his illness and then going about fighting with him.

Suppose in a certain town the traffic rules require you to keep to the right. Now, if you start driving on the left you are bound to have an accident. Some car or the other is bound to collide with yours.

On the face of it, it would seem that this accident was caused by another car crashing into yours. But you certainly would not have the right to claim that it was not you, but, rather, the driver of the other car, who was at fault, and that it was he who banged into your car and injured you! You will have to admit that the fault was yours—because you were driving on the wrong side of the road—and that it was not the mistake of the other person, who was driving on the right side.

The same principle holds true in all aspects of our lives. Whenever you face any loss or misfortune in life, you ought to know in advance that whatever has transpired is because of your own wrongdoings. This is the right way to deal with life. If you think in this way, you will reform yourself and save your future. But if, on the contrary, you go about blaming others for your woes, you will only ruin your future. And, as for your past and your present—well, they have already been ruined!

ANGER IS A WEAKNESS

The Quran refers to truthful people as those who ‘forgive when they are angry’ (42:37). This does not mean only to forgive and forget. Rather, it means rising above the psyche of anger and then behaving accordingly. It means thinking in a manner free from anger despite being driven to anger. It means to respond to a situation without being affected by anger.

Anger is a weakness, while not getting angry is a strength in its own right. If a person does not get angry, he can manage every situation. He can turn every matter in his favour. Anger destroys one’s intelligence. An angry person can neither properly understand the situation he is confronted with, nor respond to it in an appropriate manner. He is immediately drawn to violence, although violence is not the solution to any problem at all. In contrast, a person who can keep his anger under control will search for a peaceful solution—and a peaceful solution is the only certain solution to every problem.

A treasure-trove of enormous capacities is hidden inside the human mind. If a person does not get angry, he is able to use these amazing treasures that are contained in his mind in his own favour. But when a person becomes angry, being in a disturbed state of mind, he is not able to use his mental capacities. Not get angry is a great victory, while getting angry is a great defeat.

REMAINING PATIENTLY STEADFAST ON THE TRUTH

The Quran tells us about people who save themselves from loss. Such people, it relates, ‘exhort one another to truth’ and ‘exhort one another to endurance’. (103:3)

Whenever someone is firmly established on the path of Truth or invites others to the Truth, it always happens that many people become his opponents. He has to face considerable opposition. At this juncture, what he has to do is to adopt the method of

patience. He must withstand the difficulties he is faced with, and not try to blame others for them.

Patience is another name for a non-aggressive method. This means that a person who is on the path of Truth must not respond to violence with counter-violence. He must unilaterally abide by peaceful means. Patience is another name for this response.

Truth and violence cannot go together. If you want to be faithful to the Truth, you have to leave violence aside. No matter on what pretext it is used, violence is abhorrent, and all forms of violence are equally destructive. No seemingly wonderful or alluring excuse or pretext can absolve violence of its destructive consequences.

To engage in violence in the name of the Truth is itself a negation of the Truth. Those who engage in violence in the name of the Truth clearly indicate that they are not on the path of the Truth. A lover of the Truth can never be a lover of violence. Conversely, a lover of violence most certainly is not a lover of Truth, even if he believes himself to be Truth's most ardent champion.

#### THE PRICE OF PEACE

Everything has a price. You can acquire a particular thing only when you are ready to pay for it. In this world, you simply cannot get what you want without paying the appropriate price for it. This is true of peace as well. Peace, too, has its price. An individual or group can obtain peace only after paying the price. What is the price of peace? It is to tolerate loss.

This fundamental truth is narrated in the Quran in the following words:

We shall certainly test you with fear and hunger, and loss of property, lives and crops. Give good news to those who endure with fortitude. Those who say, when afflicted with a calamity, 'We belong to God and to Him we shall

return,' are the ones who will have blessings and mercy from their Lord: it is they who are on the right path! (2:155-56)

This Quranic verse tells us about a basic fact of life. And that is that according to the law on the basis of which this world has been created, it is necessary that people will face different kinds of loss. Sometimes, they will face challenges from others. At other times, they may face economic problems or loss of power. Sometimes, they may face some accident or the other. At other times, they may be denied certain benefits that they consider to be their due. And so on.

Every person undergoes such unpleasant experiences at some time or the other in her or his life. This is entirely in accordance with the law of nature. In such a situation, if people do not tolerate their losses, it will easily result in violence. But if they accept and tolerate their losses, it will enable them to live in peace.

To patiently face and tolerate loss is not tantamount to being defeated. Rather, this stance requires great courage and boldness. It is to voluntarily accept reality. It is to remain aware that even though one may have suffered some loss, one still has many resources left, on the basis of which one can rebuild one's life.

By abiding by patience and tolerance in the face of loss one saves oneself from losing one's balance. Despite being temporarily unsuccessful, one is able to preserve the ability to see things in a balanced way. One is able to survey matters realistically and make new life plans. Forgetting what one has lost, one is able to carry on with one's purpose in life on the basis of what one still has. One acts with wisdom, not hopelessness, and once again picks up one's life and journeys ahead.

In life, a new day dawns after every night. This world is full of potentials and possibilities. Here, if you lose one opportunity, you can find another one. If you miss one step, another step leads to a new door which opens up to you. In this way, it always

remains possible that if a certain plan fails, you can always make a new plan to carry on with building your life.

The fact of the matter is that in this world, bad news always comes along with good news. Every accident silently gives us the good news that we must not be frustrated and bitter, and that, instead, mustering our courage, we should search for new opportunities. If we respond in this positive way, nature itself gives us the good news that our loss is not permanent. It tells us that we can very soon rebuild our lives—and in a better way than before. It conveys to us that very soon we will discover that what seems to be our defeat is actually a source of guidance for us.

People who refuse to tolerate loss fall prey to negative thinking and so make their lives into an enormous burden. In doing so, they themselves become a burden on others. On the other hand, people who respond to loss with patience and courage can construct a new mansion on the ruins of the past. They can search for and discover a new dawn after a dark night, in the light of which they can carry on with their life's journey unimpeded.

#### ACCEPTING OFFERS OF PEACE

The aggression of the Quraysh of Makkah had led to a state of war between them and the Muslims. Among the Quranic commandments that were revealed at this juncture was this one:

Then if they should be inclined to make peace, make peace with them, and put your trust in God. Surely, it is He who is All-Hearing and All-Knowing. Should they seek to deceive you, God is enough for you. (8:61-62)

From this Quranic verse we learn that, according to Islam, peace is desirable to the maximum possible extent, so much so that if establishing peace entails a risk, then, too, it must be accepted. If in the course of war the opposing party makes an offer of reconciliation, it must be accepted without delay. Even

if there is some doubt that this offer of reconciliation might involve some sort of hidden deception, reconciliation should still be made with the opposing party, based on the confidence that God is always with those who love peace, and not with those who engage in deception.

From this we also learn that in this world, the people who work to establish peace are always those who possess great courage. People and groups always have problems with each other. There will always be issues about rights being trampled upon and injustices being committed. In such a context, those who can establish peace are the ones who can rise above other considerations to focus on peace at all costs, and who will not accept any pretext for engaging in violence. Only such brave people can establish peace in the world. Those who lack this courage can only engage in constant conflict. They can do absolutely nothing as far as establishing peace is concerned.

#### GREATER PROVISION

The Quran explains a fact of life in the following words:

Do not regard with envy the worldly benefits We have given some of them, for with these We seek only to test them. The provision of your Lord is better and more lasting. (20:131)

There are two ways you can lead your life. One way is to make the material world your target or objective and to seek your success in worldly acquisition and power. There are always differences between people as far as these things are concerned. People constantly fight with each other over these material things. And that is why materialistically-minded people always feel that their rights have been trampled upon by others and that they have suffered deprivation. These emotions are repeatedly expressed in the form of jealousy, revenge and violence.



Another way of leading your life is to focus on your achievements. A person who lives in this way is content with himself. He seeks whatever he wants within himself, and this saves him from resenting or hating others and inflicting violence on them. He obtains the sustenance of the Lord—which means that he has acquired the firm faith that he has found the Truth, that he has discovered that the existence that God has bestowed on him is far more valuable than all the treasures of gold and silver. He lives with such an awakened mind that the entire cosmos becomes for him an intellectual and spiritual feast.

A person who receives the sustenance of the Lord in this way has risen so high that things such as power and wealth appear to him to be very paltry. His mindset automatically makes him a lover of peace. He comes to regard hatred and violence as so utterly meaningless that he simply has no time at all to hate or to make plans of inflicting violence on anyone. Why would someone who has gained an invaluable treasure run after paltry baubles?

#### PEACE, THE MEANS FOR SECURITY

The Quran relates that the Prophet Shu‘ayb was addressed by his people thus:

They replied, ‘Shu‘ayb, we do not understand much of what you say. In fact, we see that you are powerless among us. Were it not for your clan, we would have stoned you, for you are not strong against us.’ (11:91)

This verse refers to the protection provided by members of the Prophet Shu‘ayb’s clan, who, despite not being true believers, protected him on the basis of tribal custom. This same phenomenon is expressed in a *hadith* in the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad, according to which God has sent every prophet along with the protecting power of his community.

In ancient times, long before the rise of modern forms of governance, people were protected by fellow members of their respective tribes. According to tribal custom and tradition, it was the duty of the tribe to protect its members against other tribes. In those days, this served as a protecting power for the prophets, too. Thus, the Prophet Muhammad received such protection from Abu Talib, head of the Banu Hashim clan. Even though Abu Talib did not accept Islam, in accordance with tribal tradition he continued to protect the Prophet from his opponents.

In the present age, the tribal system has, of course, disappeared. But the role of protective power that it once performed is now played by the secular system based on the modern conception of the state. This system now provides believers, including those engaged in *dawah* or inviting people to God's path, the same sort of protection. The modern secular state gives all its citizens the guarantee that they can follow, preach and propagate the religion of their choice. No one can obstruct them from doing so, provided, of course, they do not engage in violence.

The protective shield that guarded the prophets in the past was based on the tribal system. It was a tribal protection mechanism, not a specifically Islamic one. Yet, despite this, the prophets accepted it. Likewise, in today's world, the protection that Muslims enjoy is a secular one, and not a specifically Islamic one. In accordance with the practice of the prophets, Muslims must accept this protective mechanism and engage in peaceful *dawah* work. However, Muslim 'leaders' of the entire world branded secularism as 'irreligiousness' (*la-deeniyat*) and unleashed a verbal as well as physical war against it. In this way, they unnecessarily turned into enemies of secularism. Thereby, they left unused the valuable protection that the secular system provided them.

#### MERCY FOR HUMANITY

Addressing the Prophet Muhammad, God says in the Quran:

We have sent you forth as a mercy to all mankind. (21:107)

The advent of the Prophet was an expression of God's mercy for the whole of humankind. Through the Prophet, God informed us about the principles on the basis of which human beings can come to inhabit what the Quran refers to as *daar-us-salaam* or 'home of peace' (10:25), an abode of peace and security for its inhabitants. Through the Prophet, God conveyed to us teachings that can make for a peaceful society. The Prophet presented humankind with a complete ideology of peace. He provided us with a formula that can enable us to abstain from hatred and violence and lead a healthy life. He ushered in a revolution that made it possible for humanity to avoid confrontation and war and nurture a peaceful society.

Because of certain compelling circumstances, the Prophet had to fight some battles, but these were so minor that they might be more appropriately called skirmishes, rather than wars. The Prophet gave peace the status of a complete and comprehensive way of life. He taught us that violence leads to destruction, while peace leads to construction. He cited patience as the highest form of worship, which means remaining firmly on the path of peace. He called strife, the disrupting of the peaceful system of nature, the biggest crime. He gave such importance to peace that he equated the killing of a single individual with the slaying of the whole of humankind.

The Prophet taught us to greet each other with the greeting *Assalamu Alaikum* or 'May peace be upon you!' This means that our relationships with each other should be based on peace and security. He taught us that success in the Hereafter is the real goal of human activity and struggle in this world. In this way, he uprooted the false belief that the purpose of our life is worldly progress, which is the basis of all forms of confrontation and violence. He gave humanity this beautiful formula: Become someone who benefits others. And if you cannot benefit others, then at least become harmless as far as they are concerned. He

taught us not to consider anyone as our enemy. From him we learnt that if we behave in a good way with our opponents, we will realize that there is a potential friend hidden deep within every person we think of as our foe.

#### JIHAD, A PEACEFUL ACTIVITY

Mulla Ali Qari was a famous Islamic scholar and jurisprudent. He was born in Herat, which is now in Afghanistan, and died in Makkah in 1606. He was the author of a number of books on various Islamic subjects. One of these books is *Mirqat ul-Masabih*, which is a commentary on a Hadith collection.

In the chapter on jihad in this book, Mulla Ali Qari writes that the word ‘jihad’ literally denotes struggle and effort. He then goes on to add that at a later time, which is to say after the Prophet’s demise, ‘jihad’ began being used to refer to war against the disbelievers.

Every word has both a literal as well as a conventional meaning, one that relates to how the word is normally used and understood. This is the case with the word ‘jihad’, too. The word ‘jihad’ comes from the root *juhd* or *jahd*. The literal connotation of this is exertion with much effort. The word ‘jihad’ is conventionally used for various sorts of exertion or struggle, one of which is war. However, it is used only for a particular and exceptional sort of war, one which is fought in the cause of God (*fi sabil Allah*). A war that is pursued for wealth and power will not be called a jihad.

The Quran uses two different words in this regard: jihad and *qital*. Where the reference is to a peaceful struggle or exertion the Quran uses the word ‘jihad’. For instance, the Quran (25:52) refers to a peaceful jihad of *dawah* or inviting others to accept the faith through the Quran. And when the reference is to physical war the Quran uses the word *qital*, as for instance, in verse 121 of the third chapter of the Quran. But in the later period, after the demise of the Prophet, the word ‘jihad’ began to be used often

as synonymous with *qital*, or war. However, even if this usage of the term 'jihad' is regarded as proper, still it would be only an expanded usage of the term. In terms of the actual or essential meaning of the word, jihad is a term for a peaceful action, not a violent one. It is undertaken to transform people intellectually and spiritually, not to kill them.

#### PEACE AT ALL COSTS

The Prophet Muhammad was a great lover of peace. His opponents repeatedly wanted to embroil him in war, but he avoided it and stayed away from fighting with them. However, on a few occasions, in the face of the one-sided aggression of his opponents, he was forced to engage in defensive battles, which were of a temporary nature. One of these defensive battles was the Battle of Badr.

At the very moment when the two armies faced each other at Badr, an angel of God came to the Prophet. The angel told the Prophet that God had sent him a message of *salam* or peace. Hearing this, the Prophet replied that God is Peace, peace is from Him and to Him is peace.

From this incident we learn that, even at the time of war, the Prophet remained a peace-loving person. Even at this moment of great emergency, his mind did not come to be filled with hatred and violence. Rather, even at this time he continued to think in terms of peace and security. At this moment, too, his heart was heaving with the hope that, with God's help, he could establish an atmosphere of peace and security in the world. A true person is he who, even during war, thinks of peace, and who, even during battle, harbours the hope of peace and security in his heart.

This is no ordinary matter. Rather, it is an exalted model of positive thinking. War is the most negative of all negative things. The Prophet here stands at the edge of war but on his lips are words, not of bloodshed and violence, but, rather, of peace and

security. This undoubtedly reflects a very lofty character, that of one who, even in the face of violence, thinks of peace, and who in the midst of war makes plans for reconciliation.

#### GOD'S NAME IS PEACE

The Quran tells us various names (or attributes) of God. One of these is *As-Salam*, i.e. 'The Source of Peace'. This means that God is the epitome of peace. God loves peace and security so much that He has as one of His names *As-Salam*. The noted scholar Al-Khattabi writes that God is that Being from Whom all people are safe and secure, and from Whom they experience peace, not violence.

When God's dealings with human beings are based on peace and security, human beings should deal in the same way with each other, too. That is to say, we should relate with each other with peace and security, and not with harshness and violence.

#### WHO IS STRONG?

According to a *hadith* report, the Prophet said that a strong person is not one who defeats others in wrestling, but, rather, only he who when angry, keeps his *nafs*, or lower self, under control.

To be able to suppress one's anger while in an overwrought state is a sign of self-control. And, self-control is, undoubtedly, the greatest power. In moments of anger, self-control saves one from wrong actions. One who is lacking in self-control will burst out uncontrollably when he is angry, so much so that he can easily become violent. To keep one's anger under control is the way of a peace-loving person, while letting oneself get out of control when angry is the way of a person who glorifies violence.

Suppose two people have a fight and one of them hurls the other to the ground. This may signify only that the former is physically stronger than the latter. However, physical strength is a

very limited sort of power. In contrast, someone who is angry but is able to control his anger and behaves in a balanced way with the person who provokes him to become angry is much stronger than the person who is only physically strong. His behaviour proves that he possesses the power of intelligence, which is undoubtedly much more powerful than physical strength. Such a person can, because of his wise planning, win every battle without physically harming anyone.

#### THE FORMULA FOR SOCIAL PEACE

What is the ideal formula for social peace? How can social equilibrium be established? In this regard, a *hadith* gives us some valuable clues.

According to this report, the Prophet said that *fitna*, or strife, is asleep, and that God's curse is upon one who wakes up a sleeping *fitna*. Self-restraint in this case is a natural formula for social peace.

The fact of the matter is that within every human being there is a deeply-rooted egotism. And this egotism is such that if it is provoked, it very quickly explodes and sets off violence. However, nature has arranged for this egotism to be asleep within every person's breast. It is present within everyone, but, in accordance with the system of Creation, it is in a somnolent state. Under such conditions, a simple way to establish a peaceful society is to let the egotism that is fast asleep inside people's breasts remain as it is.

It is only those whose egotism has been provoked who go about disrupting social peace. If one abstains from provoking other people's egotism, social peace will not be ruptured. From this we learn that establishing social peace is within our own control, rather than this being dependent on others. Through your positive behaviour you can avoid provoking other people's

egos, and then you will certainly remain protected from their wrath.

#### SALVATION IN SILENCE

There are a number of traditions of the Prophet on the importance of silence. According to one tradition, the Prophet said that one who keeps silent has attained salvation.

This does not mean that people should stop speaking and become totally silent. Rather, what it actually means is that one should become silent and think and only then should one speak. We should properly train ourselves and develop the habit of speaking less and keeping silent more, and of speaking only after we have properly thought about what we are going to say. This we can do by developing the habit of consciously engaging in this practice in our ordinary, everyday conversations. If we can develop this habit in our everyday conversations, then we will respond in the same way when we are faced with extraordinary or challenging situations.

Ordinarily, what most people do is that when they are faced with a situation, they react immediately and unthinkingly, blurting out whatever comes to their mind at that moment. This is not at all a proper way to react. Rather, one must first think, and, only after that, begin to speak. If you respond in this way, you can save yourself from having to later repent about what you had said, because once you say something, you can never take it back.

It generally happens that when one is faced with an unfavourable situation, one flares up and speaks in an unpleasant manner. A simple way to save oneself from this is to develop in one's daily conversations the habit of first thinking and only then speaking. Once you become used to thinking and only then speaking in ordinary, day-to-day conversations, then, because of this habit, you will do just the same when you are confronted



with difficult situations. Your habit of controlling yourself in ordinary, everyday conversations will enable you to speak in the same way, keeping yourself under control and speaking with mental discipline in emergency situations, too.

Much of the chaos and conflict in this world has to do with words. Some words provoke hatred and violence. Other words nourish a climate of peace and humaneness. If people could only do this one thing—making the correct choice of words while speaking, and then keeping their emotions under control—most conflicts and strife would die even before they were born.

To be able to keep oneself under control while speaking is a very great thing. Only those people who keep examining themselves and constantly keep a check on their words and deeds possess this lofty attribute.

When you hear something, you should not answer or react immediately. Instead, you should pause for a while, ponder on what you have heard, and think of what your ideal response should be. This will guarantee that you reply in a proper manner to what you have heard. Instead of reacting to stones with stones, you will find yourself responding with flowers and thereby you will achieve success!

#### DO NOT CONFRONT THE ENEMY

In a *hadith* recorded in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the Prophet is said to have remarked that one should not desire confrontation with one's enemy, and that one should ask for peace from God. This indicates that if someone thinks of us as his enemy, we should not react in the same way by making him our enemy and starting to fight with him. Rather, despite this person's enmity, we should seek to avoid quarreling with him. Even though he treats us as his enemy, we should try to avoid fighting with him.

When, in this *hadith* report, the Prophet tells us to ask God for peace, it means that we should adopt the path of peace, rather than confrontation, and that along with our peace-loving efforts

we should seek succour from God. Your plea to God should not be for the destruction of the enemy. Rather, you should ask, 'O God! Bless me so that, despite people's enmity, I do not take to the path of violence and confrontation, but, instead, that I carry on with the journey of my life walking on the path of peace.'

From this we learn that according to the law of nature, peace is the general rule, while violence is an exception. We also learn that if a person or group appears to be one's enemy, confrontation is not the only way to respond. A better and more effective way is to solve the problem of an enemy through peaceful actions. The power of peace is both more effective and beneficial than the power of violence.

#### THE METHOD OF NON-VIOLENCE

According to a *hadith* report, the Prophet said that God grants to non-violence what he does not grant to violence. This is a way of expressing a law of nature that God has established in this world. On the basis of this law, if you behave in a gentle, non-violent way, your work will be more effective. But if you are harsh and violent, you will not succeed, and your efforts will fail.

Whenever someone adopts the harsh and violent way, his efforts are unnecessarily divided on two fronts: on his own inner development, on the one hand, and on fighting his external enemies, on the other. In contrast, if someone is gentle and non-violent, it becomes possible for him to focus all his energies on just one front: on his inner development. Consequently, he will be much more successful.

The above-mentioned *hadith* tells us about this basic law of nature on the basis of which the entire system of this world functions. Whatever one obtains in this world is what one gets by behaving in accordance with, rather than in violation of, this system. This system of nature is based completely on the principles of peace and non-violence. That is why whenever you

obtain something in this world, it is by these principles of peace and non-violence. By deviating from them, you can be sure that you will get nothing at all.

#### THE LIMITS OF DISSENSION

A *hadith* report relates that the Prophet declared that the best jihad is to speak a word of truth and justice in front of an oppressive ruler. The Prophet is also said to have declared that a person who sees something in his ruler that he does not like should exercise patience with regard to that matter. Likewise, in a *hadith* contained in the *Sahih Muslim*, the Prophet is said to have declared that one should listen to one's ruler and obey him, even if he whips one on one's back and seizes one's wealth.

These *hadith* reports appear to provide two different commandments. On the one hand, we are told that if we see something wrong with our rulers, we should openly announce it. On the other hand, we are also told that if we see something wrong with our rulers, we should exercise patience in that regard and that even if he oppresses us, we should tolerate it.

These prescriptions clearly indicate the distinction between announcing something, on the one hand, and taking action on it, on the other. It is a desirable thing that if you see something wrong with your rulers, you should announce it in the form of exhortation and well-wishing. But as far as taking practical steps as a reaction are concerned, one should completely abstain from them. One must distinguish between the politics of exhortation and that of confrontation. Using the legitimate right of exhortation, one should completely stay away from political confrontation.

It is very important to keep this distinction in mind. Whenever people launch movements to practically confront their rulers and make plans to oust them from power in the name of 'reform', it inevitably creates a violent atmosphere in society. However, if

people abstain from such politics of conflict and remain satisfied just with verbal exhortation, peace will always prevail and society will not degenerate into a jungle of violence.

#### PEACEFUL MEANS ARE BETTER

A *hadith* recorded in the *Sahih al-Bukhari* sheds light on a very important Islamic teaching. According to this tradition, whenever the Prophet had to choose between two methods with regard to any matter, he would always choose the easier one.

If you view this choice of the easier option in the context of violent versus peaceful methods, it would be true to say that whenever the Prophet was faced with any issue, he chose peaceful, and not violent, methods to deal with it. This is because violent methods are definitely difficult, while peaceful methods are certainly easy.

However, this is not simply a matter of ease versus difficulty. Rather, it means that peaceful methods are always efficacious, while violent methods are always ineffective. Instead of solving a given problem, violent methods only further exacerbate it and make it seem even more complicated. In this regard, we learn from the *hadith* referred to above that a more difficult method is one which makes it more difficult to achieve one's goal. In contrast, an easier method makes attaining one's goal easier.

#### FLEXIBILITY, NOT RIGIDITY

A *hadith* report likens a true worshipper of God, to a soft plant, which, whenever it is faced with a gust of wind, bends accordingly. And when the gust dies down, the plant once again stands up. In this way, it saves itself from troubles and difficulties.

According to this *hadith*, there are two ways to face a storm. One way is to be rigid when faced with it. The other way is to be flexible. Another way of putting this is to say that one way of

reacting is the violent way, while the other is the peaceful way. God wants us to abstain from the former and to choose the latter.

Those who try to react to a storm by adopting the method of rigidity only show by this that they are victims of extreme egotism. In contrast, the path of peace is based on modesty. In this world, those who let their egotism dictate their behaviour are bound to face destruction, while success is for those who adopt the path of modesty. This is expressed in the form of a *hadith*, according to which the Prophet said that God will raise high those who behave modestly.

#### PEACEFUL CITIZENS

Explaining who a true believer is, the Prophet is said to have remarked, so we learn from a *hadith* report, that people's blood and wealth are safe from such a person.

There are two ways of living in society. You can live peacefully with others, or you can choose to keep quarreling with them. The *hadith* referred to here indicates that the way of a true believer is to live along with others as a peaceful citizen. Such a person lives without creating any problem at all for other people's life, property and honour. Under no conditions whatsoever does he engage in violence.

How can members of a society live in peace with each other, refraining from troubling and oppressing each other? There is one way—and this is that, despite whatever complaints against others one may have, one should remain steadfast on the path of balance. One should bury deep in one's heart the complaints one has against others. One should abstain from venting one's ire and other negative emotions on others. In a society that consists of people who are like this, every individual will feel safe at the hands of everyone else. This peaceful society is an ideal human society.

## WAITING IS ALSO A SOLUTION

Awaiting the bounteous abundance of God is an excellent form of worship—this is what we learn from a *hadith* recorded by at-Tirmidhi.

Every individual and group repeatedly faces difficult situations. On such occasions, people, whether consciously or otherwise, take this difficulty to be a permanent condition, and so they immediately begin to fight against it. But this sort of fighting always proves to be futile. Its only outcome is that it adds some more difficulties to an already difficult situation.

No difficult situation lasts forever. It is always temporary. And so, the only easy solution to a difficulty is to adopt a policy of waiting. That is to say, one should not unnecessarily start fighting against a difficult situation. Instead, one should simply adopt a ‘wait-and-see’ policy. As a result of this policy, you will save yourself from losing your peace of mind, and whatever has to happen will happen in its own time.

When people are faced with a problem, they generally look for an instant solution. This is the basic problem. If, instead, one adopts a wait-and-see approach, the problem will no longer remain a problem at all.

## DIVINE WARNING, NOT OPPRESSION BY ONE’S FELLOW MEN

According to a *hadith*, the Prophet is said to have predicted with regard to the Muslim *ummah* that that soon people would summon one another against them just as when eating, people call others to share their meal.

Events show that this prediction came true in the second half of the 18th century with the emergence of European colonialism. The Europeans later began being joined by other communities. And this process is continuing till today. The question is: Why did this happen?

A study of the Quran reveals that this happened directly in

accordance with the practice, or *sunnat*, of God. God's *sunnat* in this regard is that He sends warnings to communities or peoples to wake them up. This is a sort of shock treatment to jolt people and make them reform themselves. As God says in the Quran:

When the affliction decreed by Us befell them, they did not humble themselves, but rather their hearts hardened, for Satan had made all their doings seem fair to them.  
(6:43)

This Quranic verse mentions a common human tendency—of dressing up a bad deed in beautiful-sounding words so that its wrongness is concealed. This is exactly what has happened with Muslims in present times. Present-day Muslim leaders have, consciously or otherwise, done exactly what this Quranic verse describes.

The problems that present-day Muslims faced from other communities were Divine warnings. However, Muslim leaders began expressing these problems in terms of 'oppression' and 'conspiracies'. As a result of this, Muslims failed to see that these events had occurred in order for them to realize their own mistakes and turn to their own internal reform. Muslims did not realize this, and owing to the wrong guidance of their 'leaders', the whole animus of the Muslims was directed on to, and against, other communities. These events were intended to make Muslims introspect, but they came to be wrongly construed as meaning that they should criticize other peoples. This tendency began magnifying over time, till it assumed the form of violence and militancy.

#### THE POWER OF SILENCE

Umar Farooq, the second Muslim Caliph, is said to have remarked, 'Destroy falsehood (*batil*) by keeping silent about it.'

According to the law of nature, truth is destined to live and

falsehood is doomed to die. And so, to put an end to falsehood, it is enough just to keep silent about it. To talk about it or to demonstrate against it is only to give it life. To ignore falsehood and to remain silent on it causes its death.

Remaining silent on falsehood simply means to ignore it. It means not to express any reaction to it in any way whatsoever. It means not protesting against it. Only those who have realized how the laws of nature function in this matter can respond to falsehood in this way. Those who are bereft of this realization agitate against falsehood, and, in doing so, become a cause for giving it life.

#### VIOLENCE, A RESULT OF FRUSTRATION

Violence is a result of a sense of being deprived, while peace is a result of a sense of attainment or achievement. People who think they have been deprived or robbed of something of theirs by others always remain immersed in negative thinking. This feeling is often expressed in the form of violence. On the other hand, those who feel that they have achieved something in life experience peace of mind. They always lead peaceful lives.

Individuals and groups that hate others, sometimes going to the extent of inflicting violence on them, prove by their actions that they feel that they have been deprived. In contrast, individuals and groups who live peacefully prove by their actions that they have achieved what they wanted to in life.

What is the reason that some people feel deprived? And, who are those others who always live with a sense of achievement or attainment?

The greatest attainment in life is to find God, while the greatest deprivation is to fail to find Him. If you have found God, nothing else remains for you to find. On the other hand, those who fail to find God suffer the maximum possible deprivation, and then nothing can cure them of their sense of deprivation.



### POSITIVE STATUS QUOISM

No sooner do you want to do something than you find yourself faced with some hurdle or the other. This happens in the case of individuals as well as entire communities. Now, one way to react to this is to first fight against these hurdles in order to try to get rid of them and then to begin whatever work one wants to. This is what is conventionally called 'radicalism'.

Radicalism seems to appeal to certain highly emotional people, people with a proclivity to extremism. Yet, it is not useful for any sort of positive purpose. Radicalism is effective only for destruction, not for construction. Radicalism not only causes the destruction of an existing system, but it also leads to the destruction of social traditions that have evolved over centuries. People are subjected to unspeakable horrors because of the bloodshed and disruption wrought by radicalism. Experience shows that although it may appear attractive at the ideological level to some people, in terms of its practical consequences radicalism has nothing positive about it at all.

Another way to respond to the challenges one inevitably faces in life is to totally avoid confrontation with a given situation, and, instead, remaining within the limits of possibility, to plan one's efforts. Accepting for the time being the given status quo, one can use the opportunities that still remain available to one. This method may be termed 'positive status quo.'

Radicalism always produces violence. In contrast, 'positive status quoism' fulfills its purpose while preserving social peace. Radicalism always only further exacerbates a given problem. Conversely, 'positive status quoism' fulfills its purpose without creating any problems in society. The former leads to destruction, the latter to construction.

The method of reform that the Prophet Muhammad used in ancient Arabia was that of 'positive status quoism'. For instance, at that time, there were 360 idols inside the Kabah. This was a big problem. But in the early Quranic revelations no order

was revealed to purify the Kabah of these idols. Instead, in this initial period the Quran's exhortation to believers was to 'purify your garments' (74:4). This meant purification of one's moral character, and that of others, too.

#### NO JUSTIFICATION FOR VIOLENCE

Violence is against human nature. It murders humanity. It is the most heinous of all crimes. Yet, despite this, why do some people still engage in violence? The reason is very simple: Such people fabricate a justification for violence, and then they begin actually to believe that their violence is justified.

But the fact is that every single justification or pretext that is offered for violence is false. Whenever an individual or group engages in violence, it also has, at the very same time, the possibility of choosing non-violent or peaceful methods. Yet, in such a situation, it still chooses violence. Why? When the opportunity exists to act without violence, why do some individuals or groups choose to act violently?

Violence should be abandoned completely and peace should be accepted completely. One should never resort to violence under any pretext whatsoever. No matter what the conditions are, one must necessarily remain firmly wedded to peaceful methods.

#### SOLVING ENMITIES

People often think of certain communities as their enemies. And then, on the basis of this imaginary perception, they start fighting against them, supposedly to save themselves from the consequences of their enmity. This imaginary enemy of theirs is, however, wholly false. And so are those actions which they engage in to counter this so-called enemy's imagined threat.

Enmity is not a constant aspect of human existence, unlike, say, the fingers of one's hands. It is just a superficial aspect. Through

positive actions, every enmity can be ended. It is like a bit of dirt that stains a glass. This bit of dirt can easily be removed—by simply washing it off with some water. A bit of dirt on a glass is not a problem in itself. The problem is created when you do not have clean water to wash it off.

It always takes two hands to clap. You cannot clap with just one hand. In the same way, enmity is a two-sided affair. If someone considers you his enemy, you can respond by not considering him your enemy. In this way, his enmity will automatically cease. The most effective way to end the problem of enmity is not to be the enemy of someone who sees you as his enemy.

#### STOCKPILING WEAPONS IS USELESS

I was once told by a successful businessman that he lived in an area adjacent to a locality inhabited by people of another community and was very concerned about protecting himself and his family from these people if they attacked him. And so, he bought every member of his family a licensed gun. ‘Now I think that I and my family are safe,’ he said. ‘I have no fear of riots now.’

I replied to him, saying, ‘You may know the principles of business, but you are unaware of the principles for social existence. You cannot protect yourself with a gun or revolver. The way to protect yourself in society is to become a good neighbour to the people around you. Let your neighbours be safe in your presence. And then, inevitably, you will find that you will also be safe living among them. If you hate them, you will only receive hate from them in return. If you are genuinely concerned about their well-being, you will, in turn, receive the gift of love and concern from them.’

I went on, ‘Suppose a crowd of people from another community gathers outside your house, and you stand on your balcony and start shooting at them with your gun. Do you really think that matters will end there? Not at all! You should know

that firing on people is a cognizable offence. And so, if you fire on them, the police will immediately arrive, and of course you can't fight with the police!

'You should also know,' I added, 'that there is a fundamental difference between your having a gun and the police having guns. Despite having a gun, you do not have the legal right to use it to shoot anyone. But the police do have this right. Fighting with another community may seem like two equal parties fighting each other, but it is an entirely different thing if you fight with the police. In the event of such a confrontation, the two parties in the confrontation would be completely unequal. In such a situation, for you to use your gun would, in terms of results, be like inviting an angry bull to attack you. Obviously, then, this sort of step is no protection at all. Rather, from the point of view of its results, it will only cause your devastation.'

#### CONSCIENCE, THE BEST JUDGE

Once, a Muslim man built a new house for himself. Then, he fenced in an adjacent bit of land and included it in his garden. His neighbour was a Hindu contractor. This Hindu contractor claimed that the land belonged to him. And so, he instigated some Hindus of the town to take action against him. A crowd of Hindus gathered on the road outside the Muslim man's house and started shouting slogans.

The Muslim man had two guns with him, but he did not use them. Instead, he came out of his house all alone and empty-handed. He did not say a word to the slogan-raising crowd except to ask them who their leader was. A man stepped out of the crowd, saying that he was their leader and asked him what he wanted.

The Muslim man turned to the crowd and requested them to remain where they were. Then, he took their leader into his

house and requested him to be seated. He asked the leader why the crowd had gathered outside.

The leader angrily replied, 'You have grabbed a Hindu brother's property, and that's why we have come here!'

The Muslim man gently said, 'You are aware that the name of the rightful owner of any property is mentioned in the official documents. These documents decide who the rightful owner of a plot is. So, what you should do is to take my documents and those of my contractor neighbour and then go to your home and examine them. You be the judge in this matter. After studying both our documents, whatever decision you come to I will unconditionally accept.'

At this, the leader suddenly turned friendly. He had entered the Muslim's house in a rage, but he now stepped out all smiles. Then, he addressed the crowd outside, saying, 'You all go back to your homes. *Miyan-ji* [a term of respect for a Muslim man] has himself made me the judge in this affair. I will see his and the contractor's documents and come to a decision.'

Accordingly, the leader went home and studied both sets of documents. And in a few days' time he gave a decision that was wholly in favour of the Muslim man.

If the Muslim man had reacted to the crowd by grabbing his gun and firing, it would certainly have provoked the angry demonstrators' egotism, or *nafs-e ammara*. And then things would have gone totally against him. But by using wisdom and reasonableness instead of a gun, he awakened their conscience, or *nafs-e-lawwama*. And when the conscience awakens, its decision is always in favour of justice. It never decides in favour of oppression and injustice.

#### VICTORY CAN ALSO BE DEFEAT

Pyrrhus was a Greek king who lived in the third century BCE. He fought the Romans and was victorious over them. But

in the course of this war, his army and the entire economy of his kingdom were badly devastated. It was an apparent victory for Pyrrhus, but, from the point of view of its results, it was synonymous with defeat. On the basis of this historical incident, the phrase ‘Pyrrhic victory’ came into being. It refers to what seems, on the face of it, to be a victory, but what in reality is a complete defeat.

If you examine the history of war in general, it will not be an exaggeration to say that most victories have turned out to be ‘Pyrrhic victories’. Every victor has to necessarily face two types of loss—one, destruction of life and property, and the other, a burning hatred in the heart of the defeated party for the victor. No victor can escape these two losses. If there is at all any difference among victors in war in this regard, it is that some victors have to face these losses at once, while others have to contend with them at some later stage.

This question of loss is connected only with the use of violent methods. The use of peaceful methods is an entirely different case. Peaceful methods lead only, and always, to victory and nothing else. There is no question of defeat at all as far as the choice of these methods is concerned, so much so that even if the result of using peaceful methods appears in the form of what seems to be a defeat, it is still actually a victory. This is because by using peaceful means one may lose a war but one does not lose the available opportunities. These opportunities and possibilities still remain open to one. Availing these, one can start new efforts and journey towards success.

#### STOP COMPLAINING AT ONCE

A complaining mentality is a baneful mentality. It makes people think negatively. A person who always complains is rendered incapable of thinking positively. And this sort of mentality is, without a shred of doubt, the root of all ills. In most cases of

violence, it is this mentality of constant complaint that is seen to be at work.

This world has been created in such a way that most people will often be led to complain about each other. In this regard, what we need to do is to dispel a complaint about someone as soon as it enters our minds. However, what generally happens is that a complaint is formed, first in our conscious minds, and then, if we constantly obsess about it, gradually it seeps into our unconsciousness. And then it becomes so deeply entrenched that after this it cannot be rooted out.

In this situation, the wise approach is to nip all complaints in the bud. You should remove them soon as they appear in your mind. If you do not do this, they will gradually become an integral part of your psyche, and, after this, your thinking will become negative. You will start thinking of others as your enemies. You might even, if you get the opportunity, resort to confrontation and physical violence against those you have complaints against, even if this is entirely counterproductive for you.

The formula for nipping complaints in the bud is suggested in the following Quranic verse:

Whatever misfortune befalls you is of your own doing  
(42:30)

This means that whenever you have a complaint against somebody, what you should immediately do is to turn the direction of the complaint towards yourself. You should search for some explanation of the issue in which you yourself emerge as the culprit. When you realise that the mistake is actually yours, and not someone else's, you will set yourself to rectifying your mistake and not waste your time making demands and protesting against some imaginary enemy.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# War and Peace in Islam



To understand the status of war and peace in Islam, we need to understand what the target of the Islamic mission is. War and peace are two different methods, not goals in themselves. Hence, if we are able to determine what the target of the mission of Islam is, this will itself determine if the method that Islam advocates is war or peace.

The Quran gives a very clear answer to this question. In this regard, the Quran (25:52) addressing the Prophet, lays down a general commandment to engage in peaceful jihad through it by changing people's thinking. In other words, the mission of the Quran is not territorial conquest, but, rather, the moulding of people's minds. Islam's target is to bring about an intellectual revolution, not the physical subjugation of people.

If you study the Quran as well as the way the Prophet carried on with his mission, it will be clear that the target of his mission was to transform people's hearts and minds. Thus, the Quran states:

It is He who sends down to His Servant clear revelations,  
so that He may lead you out of darkness into light. (57:9)

According to a *hadith*, the Prophet said that there is just one thing that is of real importance as far as reforming human beings is concerned—and that is the reform of the heart. If a person's heart is transformed, his whole life is completely changed. When



the Prophet received the first revelation, he called the people of Makkah and informed them that he had been sent to give them news about what would happen after death. In the same way, when he entered Madinah, he exhorted the people of the town to save themselves from hell-fire.

The Quran and the Prophet's life clearly indicate that the real and basic aim of Islam is the transformation of people's minds. This is the beginning of the Islamic mission as well as its finale. But there are all sorts of people in the world, and, according to the Creation Plan of God itself, everyone has full freedom. On the basis of this freedom, some people opposed the Prophet. Some even went to the extent of doing battle with him, seeking to destroy his mission. It was because of this that the Prophet and his Companions had to take up arms in their defense, as a temporary measure. Accordingly, one can rightly say that in Islam peace has the status of being the general rule, while war is just an exception.

The life of the Prophet Muhammad as a prophet extended over a period of 23 years. In this period, the Quran was revealed in installments over time according to the prevailing conditions. The revelation of one section of the Quran extended over a period of some 20 years, and another section over a period of around three years. The verses revealed in the 20-year period all relate to peaceful teachings—for instance, worship, ethics, justice, humaneness, and so on. As far as the war-related verses are concerned, they were revealed only in the three-year period, when the followers of Islam were faced with armed aggression.

There are 114 chapters in the Quran, and more than 6000 verses. Of these verses, only some 40 relate, directly or indirectly, to war or *qital*: in terms of proportion, less than 1 per cent. .

In the same way, the Bhagavad Gita contains many moral and wise teachings. But, along with this, the Gita also relates that Krishna insisted that Arjuna should go ahead and fight in war.

It is obvious that these statements in the Gita are an exception,

not the general rule. The same is true in the case of the Quran as well.

An important aspect of the peace-loving nature of Islam is that it makes a distinction between an enemy or opponent, on the one hand, and an attacker, on the other. According to Islam, if a group launches a one-sided or unilateral attack and gives rise to a state of aggression, then, as a necessary evil, war can be fought for the sake of defense. But as far as an enemy is concerned, Islam does not permit launching war simply because of existing enmity. In this regard, the following verse of the Quran gives clear instruction to Muslims:

Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend. (41:34)

This Quranic verse teaches us that even if someone appears to us as an enemy, we should not regard him as an eternal enemy. Rather, as this verse suggests, inside every enemy a potential friend is hidden. The Quran exhorts us to discover this friend and turn this potential of friendship into a reality. After this, we would not have any complaints about anyone's enmity.

This issue is also illustrated in a *hadith*. Indicating the Prophet's general policy, the Prophet's wife Aisha narrates that whenever he had to choose between two things, he always chose the easier one.

Methods of action are of two types: violent methods and peaceful methods. If you compare the two, you will agree that in the event of a dispute, adopting a violent method is always a harder option. In contrast, adopting a peaceful method is always an easier option. Accordingly, one could say that the general policy of Islam is that whenever one is faced with a situation of conflict involving an opponent, one must respond by choosing a peaceful method, not a violent one. In present times, when human freedom has been accepted as an inalienable right, peaceful methods alone should be used. This is because

using violent means involves many obstacles, unlike the case of peaceful means.

Here one should add that out of the few, limited wars that took place at the time of the Prophet, there were certain temporal context-related factors at work. These wars were fought in the first half of the seventh century CE. This was a period of religious coercion and persecution. At that time, there was simply no religious tolerance, in the sense that we understand the term today. The opponents of *tawhid*, the oneness of God, unleashed fierce aggression against the Prophet, that compelled him to fight in defense. However, in today's world, religious freedom has been accepted as the inalienable right of every person and community. Hence, today there is absolutely no question of engaging in war to secure one's religious rights.

Peace has such great importance in Islam that Muslims have been instructed to maintain peace under all conditions even while tolerating unfavourable situations. In the face of torments at the hands of others, they must respond with patience, steadfastness and avoidance of confrontation. They must preserve peace at all costs, even, if need be, through unilateral and one-sided action. This is an important Islamic principle. This commandment has been given because the constructive agenda of Islam can be carried out only in a climate of peace and balance. There is only one exception to this, and that is in the event of an enemy becoming an aggressor and engaging in physical aggression.

The Prophet of Islam began his prophetic mission in Makkah where he carried on his work for 13 years. During this period, his Makkan opponents repeatedly harassed him. Yet, he and his Companions unilaterally tolerated this. One expression of this policy of exercising patience and avoiding confrontation was when, to stave off war, the Prophet and his Companions left Makkah and went to Madinah, some 300 miles away. Yet, despite this, the Makkan opponents did not remain silent. Instead, they launched aggressive attacks on Madinah. These attacks are called *ghazwas* in the biographies of the Prophet. The total number

of these *ghazwas*, both big and small, is calculated at 83. But only on three of these occasions did full-fledged war break out between the Prophet and his opponents. This means that in 80 *ghazwas* the Prophet was able to stave off physical confrontation with his opponents through avoidance and wise policy. Only on three occasions—the battles of Badr, Uhud and Hunayn—did he engage in armed conflict, and this was because of compelling circumstances.

An example of this policy of the Prophet of avoiding physical confrontation is that of the Treaty of Hudaibiya. When war-like conditions developed between the Prophet and his opponents, he began efforts to end these conditions through unilateral or one-sided action and to establish peace between both parties. For this purpose, he began discussions for reconciliation with his opponents, which carried on for two weeks. These discussions took place at Hudaibiya, near Makkah. That is why the treaty that resulted is called the Treaty of Hudaibiya. This was a peace treaty between the two parties. During the discussions that led up to the treaty the Prophet noticed that his opponents were unwilling to budge from their obstinacy. And so, accepting the one-sided conditions that they insisted on, he entered into a peace treaty with them.

The purpose of this treaty was to end the tension between the two parties and establish a climate of normalcy, so that in such an atmosphere the work of *dawah* and other constructive activities—which are the real aim of the Islamic mission—could be carried on with. With this treaty, normalcy was established, and so all the constructive activities that Islam promotes began being carried out in full swing. And the final result of this was that Islam spread across the entire region.

Here it is necessary to add that, according to Islamic teachings, war is the task of only a duly established government. It is not the task of non-governmental actors, whether individuals or organizations. If non-governmental organizations feel the need for any reform, they can make efforts, but only while remaining

within peaceful limits. It is not at all legitimate for them to resort to violence.

In this regard, there are two very important points to note. One is that it is not legitimate for non-governmental organisations to launch violent movements under any pretext whatsoever. The other is that although it is legitimate for an established government to engage in war, it can only do so if it openly announces it. In Islam, an undeclared or unannounced war is not legitimate at all. Keeping these two conditions in mind, it will be readily apparent that both guerilla war and proxy war are illegitimate in Islam. Guerilla war is illegitimate according to Islam because it is launched by non-governmental organisations. And, proxy war is illegitimate because although a government is also involved in it, its involvement is unannounced. War without announcement is not permissible for an Islamic government.

This world is made in such a way that situations of conflict between individuals and groups are inevitable. In such situations, Islam instructs us that we should not allow disputes to degenerate into violent conflicts. This is the Quranic approach of patience and avoidance of conflict. As a firm principle, the Quran tells us that from the point of view of results, the best way is to resolve disputes through reconciliation. This is because, by adopting the method of reconciliation one is able to save one's resources from being wasted in confrontation and fully use them in constructive activities instead. Reflecting this wise approach, the Prophet, according to a *hadith* recorded in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, advised us not to desire to confront our enemies, and that we should seek peace from God.

In this regard, the Quran says:

Whenever they kindle the fire of war, God puts it out.  
(5:64)

This Quranic verse tells us about the essence of Islamic teachings about war and peace—that people are often willing to go to war with each other for various reasons. This is related

to the principle of competition. But the task for the followers of Islam is that when others stir the flames of war, they must, through unilateral and one-sided action if need be, put the flames out. In other words, their policy should be not war, but, rather, avoidance of war. On the one hand, they must, without going to the extent of war, protect their interests. On the other hand, their responsibility is also to become messengers of peace. They should be heralds of peace, not war-mongers.

This Islamic spirit was clearly reflected in the Prophet's life. Even when he was the head of the State in Madinah he did not unleash war in order to subdue people and make them his subjects. Instead, he initiated dialogue with various tribes in Arabia and entered into treaties with them. In this way, he brought together various tribes scattered across Arabia on the basis of peace.

If you seriously study Islam, you will realise that, in fact, Islam seeks to cut the very roots of the factors that lead people to go to war. Why do people go to war? There are two basic reasons. Firstly, to eliminate their enemies. And, secondly, to acquire political power. There is simply no justification in Islam for war for these either of these two purposes.

As far as an enemy is concerned, as I mentioned earlier, a Quranic verse serves as an eternal guiding principle in this regard. This verse tells us:

Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend. (41:34)

This verse suggests that as regards responding to a foe, Islam's teaching is this: finish off his enmity, not the enemy himself. This suggests that no enemy is one's real enemy. Inside every enemy a potential friend is hidden. And so, the followers of Islam should, through one-sided and unilateral goodness and kind behaviour, try to reach that hidden friend. Through their good behaviour, they can transform their enemies into their friends.

A study of the Quran indicates that it distinguishes between enemies or opponents, on the one hand, and attackers, on the other. As far as enemies are concerned, the Quranic commandment is not to deal with them with hatred. Rather, through goodness one should try to change them into one's friends. However, if someone attacks you in an entirely one-sided manner, to respond by fighting in self-defense is legitimate. Among the Quranic verses that relate to this is the following:

And fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression – for surely, God does not love aggressors. (2:190)

Quranic verses of this sort indicate that Islam allows for war only when others launch an aggressive attack on the followers of Islam. In the absence of this sort of actual aggression, Islam does not permit war.

A basic principle in Islam with regard to war and peace is expressed in the following Quranic verse:

As long as they act straight with you, act straight with them. (9:7)

This Quranic commandment teaches that the principle guiding relations between different communities is that as long as others relate in a peaceful manner with the followers of Islam, the latter must behave likewise. It is impermissible for followers of Islam to resort to war, on any pretext whatsoever, against others if the latter relate in a peaceful manner with them. Other than in the event of being faced with aggression, no pretext or cause for war is acceptable.

The Prophet was born in the year 570 CE. He received his prophethood in 610 CE. After this, he remained in this world as a prophet for 23 years. He spent the first 13 years of this period in Makkah, and the remaining 10 in Madinah. Some verses of the Quran were revealed in the Prophet's Makkan period, and some others in his Madinan period.

Throughout his life as a prophet what did the Prophet do? He recited to the people non-war-related Quranic verses, such as 'Read in the name of your Lord Who created' (96:1). He kept asking them to acknowledge the one God. He taught them how to worship and make supplications to God. He taught them about morality and humaneness. He told them that when others troubled them, even then they must behave with patience and avoid conflict. He gave people the teachings of the Quran, as a book for reforming themselves and for inviting others to tread God's path. He taught them that real success is entry into paradise, not entry into the institutions of power in this world. By his own practical example, he showed people how to carry on the mission of Islam through peaceful means and without resorting to confrontation. He demonstrated how it is possible for people to save themselves from falling prey to hatred of others in even the most turbulent situations, and how, at such times, one can remain peaceful and carry on working for the true welfare of others.

All these non-violent activities of the Prophet are undoubtedly exalted Islamic actions. In fact, it is these that are the very essence of the mission of prophethood. As far as war is concerned, it is only as an exceptional necessity.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# The Treaty of Hdaybiya



The Treaty of Hdaybiya is an important event in the early history of Islam. When this treaty was signed, a Quranic verse was revealed which called it a 'clear victory' (48:1).

The Prophet began his mission in 610 AH. His mission was that of *tawhid*, the oneness of God. At that time, there were many polytheists in Arabia. They did not like the Prophet's mission. They bitterly opposed him, so much so that they unleashed war against him. This climate of war prevailed for many years. Because of this, it was not possible to carry on, in a balanced manner, the work of *dawah*, or inviting people to tread God's path, and other constructive activities.

In order to end this unfavourable environment, the Prophet began reconciliatory talks with his opponents at a place called Hdaybiya. His opponents kept insisting on very severe conditions. After two weeks of talks, the Prophet unilaterally accepted their conditions and entered into a peace treaty with them. In this way, he put an end to the existing state of war and established peace with his opponents.

As a result of this treaty, the followers of Islam gained the opportunity of engaging in *dawah* and other constructive work. And so, because of this, within just two years, Islam became so firmly established that very soon, without shedding blood, it became dominant all across Arabia.

The Treaty of Hdaybiya was not an isolated event. Rather, it was a manifestation of a general principle of nature. It can be

described, in other words, as a policy of adjustment. In this world, no individual or community lives all by itself. Here, people live together or in proximity with many others. Everyone's interests are different. And because of this, problems repeatedly arise between people.

In this context, there are just two options. One can either try to clash with a problem, or one can avoid it and move on ahead. The first method is that of war, the latter of reconciliation. The Quran teaches us that the policy of reconciliation is the best policy. The Prophet acted on this Quranic commandment in entering into the Treaty of Hdaybiya, which proved to be a 'clear victory' for Islam.

This method of reconciliation or adjustment is the method of nature. Think of a flowing stream. Whenever a rock comes in its way, it does not try to break it. Rather, it makes a way for itself around the rock and moves on ahead. Likewise, someone driving his car on the road does not willingly crash into a vehicle coming from the opposite direction. Rather, he simply shifts to one side, lets the vehicle pass, and then moves on ahead.

This method of reconciliation was exemplified in the Treaty of Hdaybiya. The Hdaybiya method can be expressed in the following words: Ignore the problems and avail of the opportunities. This is an eternal principle, one that relates to the whole of human life. Be it family or social affairs or international relations, everywhere this is the only principle for success in life. The consequence of abandoning the Hdaybiya Treaty method is confrontation—and no problem can ever be solved through confrontation. If the Hdaybiya Treaty method is Life, then confrontation and war are nothing but Death.

The Hdaybiya Treaty method is the only method for success in the present-day world. It rescues people from negative thinking and leads them to think in a positive way. It saves people from wasting their time in confrontation and from failure to use available opportunities within the possible limits. The Hdaybiya Treaty method makes people capable of transforming their disadvantages into advantages, their minuses into pluses.

## CHAPTER SIX

# *The ‘Islamisation’ of Violence*



The Quran mentions that Cain, son of Adam, the first man, killed his own brother, Abel, because of some personal issue. After this, the Quran declares:

That was why We laid it down for the Children of Israel that whoever killed a human being—except as a punishment for murder or for spreading corruption in the land—shall be regarded as having killed all mankind, and that whoever saved a human life shall be regarded as having saved all mankind. Our messengers came to them with clear signs, but many of them continued to commit excesses in the land. (5:32)

From this Quranic verse we learn that killing human beings has always been considered a heinous crime according to the Divine law, although, owing to their disobedience, in every age human beings have violated this law. There is, however, a distinction as far as this is concerned between the past and the present. In the past, people would kill others generally for their own personal interests or in revenge. That is why at that time such killings were limited. They did not go to the extent of unlimited slaughter.

In present times, in contrast, the killing of fellow human

beings has assumed a new form. This is what can be called 'ideological murder'. That is to say, killing people on the basis of a particular ideology, or shedding human blood on the basis of some ideological justification. This notion of ideologically-justified violence has made it possible for people to blindly and indiscriminately kill others, ignoring the distinction between culprits and innocents. And this does not prick their conscience at all, because, based on their misconceptions, they think that they are killing people for the sake of the Truth.

Ideological justification of violence was invented in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Communists. They believed in the theory of 'Dialectical Materialism'. According to this belief, the only way that 'Revolution' could come about was by one class violently wiping out another. This belief led these people to massacre some 50 million people in different parts of the world.

A second, even more frightening, example of 'ideological violence' was that which emerged in the Muslim world. This extremist ideology got a major boost in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two present-day Muslim parties in particular were responsible for developing and spreading this ideology—the Ikhwan-ul-Muslimoon or 'Muslim Brotherhood' in the Arab world, and the Jamaat-e-Islami in the non-Arab world.

Based on its ideology, the Ikhwan adopted the following slogan: *al-Quran dasturuna wal jihad manhajuna*, or 'The Quran is our Constitution, and Jihad is Our Method.' 'Through jihad [in the sense of violent method]', they insisted, 'We have to enforce the Quran throughout the whole world.' This slogan became so popular in the Arab world that people began singing on the streets:

*Halumma nuqatil! Halumma nuqatil!*  
*Fa innal qitala sabilar rashadi!*

Come, let us wage war! Come, let us wage war!  
Because war is the path to success!

From Palestine to Afghanistan, and from Chechnya to Bosnia, wherever violence was resorted to in the name of 'Islamic Jihad', it was all a product of this ideology.

In the same way, the Jamaat-e-Islami developed the idea that all the systems prevailing throughout the world today are 'false systems', or *taghuti nizams*. It claimed that it was the duty of every Muslim to eliminate these 'false systems' and to enforce the 'Islamic system' in their place. It contended that this work was so very necessary that if it did not succeed through admonishment, the followers of Islam should use violence and snatch the keys of power from the upholders of falsehood and enforce a Government based on Islamic law over the entire world. The violence that is happening in the name of Islam in places like Pakistan and Kashmir is entirely a result of this self-created ideology.

The horrific violence in the name of Islam, both before and after 9/11 in different parts of the world, is, directly or indirectly, a result of these two self-proclaimed 'revolutionary' movements.

The starting-point of the intellectual deviance of the founders of these two parties is their failure to understand the difference between a party (*jama'at*) and the state. Something which was only the responsibility of an established state came to be regarded by them as the responsibility of the party that they had formed. According to Islamic teachings, actions such as jihad, in the sense of *qital* or physical warfare, and the enforcement of Islamic laws related to collective affairs, are entirely the responsibility of a government. It is completely forbidden in Islam for non-state actors to form parties for political agitation for these purposes.

What the limits of the sphere of activity of a *jama'at*, or party, in Islam are is indicated in the following Quranic verse:

Let there be a group among you who call others to good, and enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong: those who do this shall be successful. (3:104)

According to this Quranic commandment, it is legitimate for non-state actors to establish a *jama'at* or party only for

two purposes. One, for peacefully inviting people to what is good, or *dawat-e khair*, and, two, for peacefully preaching the message of God to people. The former refers to conveying the message of Islam to non-Muslims. And by enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong is meant the fulfilling of the responsibility of exhorting and advising Muslims. Besides this, forming organizations for political agitation is entirely an innovation or *bid'ah* and deviation (*zalalat*) from the right path that has no sanction in Islam. It must be made clear here that in the Quran the term *jama'at* refers to a group, and not to a political party.

The ideology invented by the founders of the Ikhwan ul-Muslimoon and the Jamaat-e-Islami was against the Islamic *shariah* as well as against nature. Such a self-styled ideological interpretation always starts with violence and ends in hypocrisy. As long as people are obsessed by their romantic notions they are so mesmerized by their imaginary 'revolution' that they can go to the extent of declaring legitimate even suicide-bombing in the name of seeking martyrdom. But when the hard rock of reality forces their fervour to cool down, they resort to sheer hypocrisy: that is, at the intellectual level and in terms of belief they continue to cling to their ideology, but in practical terms, they fully adjust to reality in order to protect their worldly interests.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# *What is Terrorism?*



These days, there is much talk of terrorism. Across the globe, people are writing and talking about it. But, as far I know, no clear definition of the term has emerged as yet. People condemn terrorism but, still, they are not able to clearly define what it is.

I have tried to understand this question in the light of Islamic teachings. Based on my study and analysis, I define terrorism as armed struggle by non-governmental actors.

According to Islamic teachings, any person or party has the right to launch a peaceful movement for national or political purposes. They retain this right as long as they do not, directly or indirectly, engage in aggression. In Islam, only a duly established government has the right to use arms or to engage in military action, if there is a genuine need for it. Non-governmental organisations do not have the right to take up arms under any pretext. I have written about this Islamic ruling in detail in several of my books.

According to internationally accepted principles, established governments have the right to punish criminals and to engage in defense against attackers. This is an Islamic principle, too. In the light of this principle, one could define terrorism as stated above as armed action engaged in by a non-governmental organisation. No matter what pretext for resorting to violence a non-governmental organisation may employ, its violent actions are, under all circumstances, unacceptable. If a non-governmental organisation feels that there is injustice in a certain country or that human rights are being violated, it has the right only to make efforts to address the situation by using peaceful means. Under no circumstances and under no pretext is it permissible for it to adopt violent methods.

Suppose an individual or a non-governmental organisation were to argue, 'We want to work peacefully, but our opponents

are not ready to give us our rights even if we use peaceful means. In these circumstances, what can we do?"

The answer to this is that the responsibility for these matters lies with the government, and not with non-governmental organisations. If someone feels that the government is failing to live up to its responsibilities, even then it is impermissible for him to take on what is the government's work. Even in these conditions he has to choose between only two alternatives: either to exercise patience, or else to make peaceful efforts. That is to say, either he can do nothing at all, or he can engage in peaceful efforts.

Here, the question arises about the Islamic ruling about state terrorism, that is, when the state engages in the same sort of undesirable violence as non-governmental terrorist organisations. What is the Islamic ruling in such a situation? The answer is that this sort of governmental violence represents a state's misusing a right that it possesses, while violence is for non-governmental organisations something that they have no right to engage in at all, under any circumstances. Clearly, there is a fundamental difference between doing something which one has no right whatsoever to do, on the one hand, and misusing a right that one is legally entitled to.

In other words, if a non-governmental organisation engages in violence, the Islamic ruling is that, without even asking it on what grounds or pretext it has resorted to violence, it must completely abstain from it. In contrast, if an established government were to engage in inappropriate violence, it would be told that it must use its right to employ violence only in a legally permissible manner. By misusing this right, a government can turn itself into an anarchical body, as is the case of a non-governmental organisation.

This point can be understood with the help of a simile. Suppose a surgeon uses his surgical knife to operate on the wrong part of a patient's body. In this case, he would be guilty of misusing a right that he is entitled to. A trained surgeon definitely has the right to use his surgical knife to operate on the correct part of a patient's body, but he has no right to cut off a wrong part. In contrast to this, if a person who is not a surgeon starts to use a knife on someone's body, it would be wrong under all circumstances, because he does not have the right to wield a knife against anyone else at all.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

# *The Secret of the ‘Clear Victory’*



When the Prophet, along with his Companions, wanted to enter Makkah to perform the Umrah or the ‘minor pilgrimage’, he was wrongfully stopped by the leaders of the town at a place called Hdaybiya. This created a situation of conflict between the Muslims and the Makkan polytheists. The Prophet resolved this conflict by withdrawing his right to enter the town. In response, the Makkans gave him the guarantee that they would cease their war against him so that peace could prevail between the two parties.

In the immediate wake of the Treaty of Hdaybiya, a chapter of the Quran (48) was revealed, in which it was declared that this treaty had been a ‘clear victory’. From this Quranic declaration one can deduce an important principle—that a dispute is always resolved through the method of ‘give and take’. The Prophet and his Companions accepted the demand of their opponents to relinquish their right to enter Makkah. In return, the Makkan opponents agreed to cease their war against the followers of Islam, thus giving the latter the opportunity of carrying on with their work peacefully.

This point can be expressed in a different way: that in this world only those people can succeed who are ready to step back,

if need be, without feeling that they have been defeated. Only those who are willing to give to others are capable of obtaining anything. Only those who are brave enough to make way for others can engage in successful action.

This principle is the key to peacefully resolving all sorts of conflicts, even those at the international level. Consider the Kashmir conflict, for instance, in the light of this principle. The policies of the leaders of Pakistan with regard to the resolution of this conflict have proven to be completely unsuccessful. The only reason for this is that they have failed to adopt this above-mentioned Quranic principle. They are ignorant of the law of nature.

In 1947, the Kashmir issue was plain and simple. At that time, it was possible for the Pakistani leadership to relinquish their claim to Hyderabad, and, consequently, get the whole of Kashmir. But owing to their lack of foresight, these leaders did nothing of the sort, because of which the Kashmir issue became a deadly conflict between India and Pakistan.

After the 1971 Bangladesh war, some 93,000 Pakistani soldiers fell into India's hands. At that time, India could have returned these men to Pakistan and ensured a permanent resolution of the Kashmir conflict. But, once again, the leadership of both countries failed, and despite this invaluable opportunity, the Kashmir conflict continued to remain unresolved.

Towards the end of 2001, the leaders of India and Pakistan met at Agra to discuss the Kashmir question. On this occasion, I put forward a proposal—that both parties should accept the status quo in Kashmir and thereby end the conflict. That is to say, that part of Kashmir that is under Pakistani occupation would become part of Pakistan, while the part that is under India's administration would be recognised as an integral part of India. But on this occasion, too, the leaders of the two countries failed to enter into any agreement, and so the conflict remains as it was before.

I then made another suggestion—of adopting what I called

a 'delinking policy'. That is to say, the question of Kashmir's political status should be delinked from other important human concerns in the context of relations between India and Pakistan. The Kashmir question should then be sought to be resolved entirely through peaceful dialogue. As regards other, non-political issues, relations between the two countries should be fully normalised. For instance, with regard to trade, education, travel, tourism, cultural relations and other such matters, India and Pakistan should establish fully normal and friendly relations—the same sort of relations as exist, for instance, between India and Nepal or between the different European countries. The advantage of this solution would be that the Kashmir question would not stand in the way of progress on other fronts as far as India-Pakistan relations were concerned, as is the case at present.

The biggest blunder of the Pakistani leadership with regard to Kashmir is that they are still living in the past. They want to extract the price of their mistakes from the other party. Completely ignoring an unchangeable principle of nature, they want to build an imaginary world of their own. However, this is completely impossible in the real world.

Pakistan's completely unrealistic approach to the Kashmir question has greatly damaged Pakistan itself. If it continues with this unrealistic approach, its final consequence could be an enormously destructive war between Pakistan and India. If, God forbid, such a war breaks out, it would prove deadly for both countries. However, because India is a large country, it will be able to bear it. But Pakistan, in comparison, is a much smaller country. Today, it refuses to accept India's control over Kashmir. But in the event of such a devastating war, Pakistan would itself have to accept coming under the control of numerous countries to recover and remain alive with their assistance. And as far as Kashmir is concerned, its political map will have remained completely unaltered.

## CHAPTER NINE

# *Anti-Islam in the Name of Islam*



Some time ago, I met a Muslim who lives in America. In the course of our conversation, he mentioned that these days the image of Islam has become so negative in America that he hesitates to tell anyone that he is a Muslim. ‘If anyone asks me my religion,’ he explained, ‘I say that my religion is Humanism. If I tell them that I believe in Islam, they will at once say, “Then you must be a terrorist!”’

The man accused the media of manufacturing this image of Islam. But I replied, ‘No. Rather, this image of Islam has been created by Muslims themselves. The fact is that in various places Muslims are engaged in violent movements in the name of Islam, which the media reports. Because Muslims spearhead these violent movements in the name of Islam, the media also attributes them to Islam. When Muslims themselves are engaged in such movements in the name of Islam, how can the media call them by some other name?’

The man responded by saying that only just a few Muslims were engaged in such violent movements. Hence, he protested, it was wrong to create a negative image about all Muslims based on the actions of these few. My answer to him was, ‘It is true that relatively few Muslims are engaged in such movements.

But, along with this, it is also true that the rest of the Muslims do not openly denounce such movements. They are silent on them. Hence, in accordance with Islamic principles themselves, it would not be wrong to say that, even if only a few people are directly responsible for spearheading these violent and hate-driven movements in the name of Islam, the rest of the Muslims are indirectly responsible for them.'

This approach of Muslims today is extremely lamentable. In the name of establishing 'Islamic Government' and 'The Prophetic System' (*Nizam-e Mustafa*) and engaging in 'Islamic Jihad', such acts are being committed as are completely opposed to Islam. Instead of attracting people to the religion of God, these deeds are only driving them away from it.

#### THE ISLAMIC SYSTEM

In present times, numerous violent movements are being spearheaded in the name of establishing the 'Islamic System' or the 'Prophetic System'. These movements, however, are simply a ruse to engage in a quest for political leadership in the name of Islam, and this is in spite of the fact that to launch and conduct a movement in order to acquire political dominance is itself not permissible in Islam. The aim of a genuine Islamic movement is the Islamisation of individuals, not the Islamisation of the government or the state. Accordingly, for centuries the Sufis focused on the Islamisation of individuals. This work continued, using peaceful methods, and never became a source for spreading hatred and violence. The Sufis always promoted peace and humanity, while the so-called 'revolutionary Islamic' movements of today are producing completely the opposite results.

The linking of Islam with hatred and violence is entirely the result of the misguidance of modern-day so-called Muslim leaders, who have been spearheading violent movements aimed at acquiring political power. Through their actions, these people

have made Islam seem like a religion of hatred and violence, although, in actual fact, the Islam sent by God is a religion of peace and concern for the welfare for all. A true Muslim is one who is concerned about the welfare of humanity, not someone who is at war with humanity.

#### ISLAMIC JIHAD

If someone were to sit somewhere and move his hands about and stand up and then claim that he was offering his prayers in the Islamic way, his actions would not represent the Islamic form of prayer. The Islamic form of prayer has certain clearly defined conditions or requisites. Only if an action observes these conditions or requisites can it be said to constitute the Islamic form of prayer. Otherwise, it will not be considered to be such.

The same holds true of Islamic jihad. Jihad has certain clearly-determined conditions or requisites. An action that fully observes these conditions or requisites would, in God's eyes, be a jihad. An action that does not observe these conditions or requisites is a meaningless agitation, and certainly not a jihad in the true sense.

An Islamic jihad is one which is engaged in in the path of God. To unleash war for the sake of power or wealth and other worldly things and call it jihad when it is nothing but strife or *fasad* is not right. Those who are involved in this sort of action definitely cannot, under any conditions, get the credit for engaging in Islamic jihad. Furthermore, according to the Islamic *shariah*, only an established government has the prerogative of declaring war. An individual or a group of individuals does not have the authority to declare war on its own against anyone in the name of jihad. No matter what complaint an individual or a group may have, it must necessarily act within peaceful limits. It is in no way legitimate for it to resort to war and violence.

Jihad, in the form of *qital* or war, is a wholly defensive action.

Aggressive *qital* or offensive war is completely forbidden in Islam. Furthermore, if one is faced with an aggressive attack from another community, even then all possible efforts should be made to stave off war. War can only be resorted to when all efforts to stave it off or avoid it have failed. The opponents of the Prophet sought to entangle him in war and confrontation on more than 80 occasions, but he was able to avoid fighting through wise action. Only on three occasions (the battles of Badr, Uhud and Hunayn), when no option was left but war did he participate in fighting.

Another aspect of a legitimate war in Islam is that it should be an open affair. To engage in secret military actions is definitely not legitimate in Islam. And so, proxy war is regarded by Islam as illegitimate, because in such a war the government uses a group to engage in violence by providing it covert assistance, but it does not participate in the war openly itself.

#### HOSTAGE-TAKING

These days, some Muslims are resorting to violence against their imaginary enemies by resorting to hijacking and taking people hostage. All such tactics are completely illegitimate in Islam. Those who engage in such actions undoubtedly have no fear of being held to account by God. Otherwise, they would never do such terrible things. Such attacks target and harm innocent people. These cowardly actions are wholly against humanity as well as against the religion of God.

An instance from the life of the Prophet clearly illustrates the point that taking people as hostages is completely un-Islamic. Opponents of the Prophet in Makkah once captured some Muslims and kept them prisoner. At this time, the Prophet had entered into a treaty with the Makkans at Hudaibiya. But while entering into this treaty, he did not ask the Makkans to return the men whom they had captured. In fact, he unilaterally

announced that if any of the Makkan polytheists fell into the Muslims' hands, the Muslims would not detain them, but, rather, would send them back to the Makkans. This indicates that even if their opponents took some Muslims as hostages, it was still not legitimate for Muslims to do the same by taking some of their opponents' men as hostage.

#### THE REAL CULPRITS

Who, then, are really responsible for stirring up a storm of hatred and violence in the name of Islam today? The Muslim youths who are engaged in these hate-driven and violent acts cannot be responsible for this. Rather, the blame is upon the so-called 'Islamic thinkers', who, in the name of 'Islamic Revolution', gave these youths an ideology that led to such negative consequences. These so-called 'Islamic thinkers' have concocted a completely false, political interpretation of Islam.

The method of Islam is the method of *dawah*. The opposite of this is the method of politics. The method of *dawah* is based on peace. The method of politics is based on confrontation. The two methods are entirely opposed to each other. Based on their particular mentality, people who choose the political method consider others as their enemies. The result of this has been that Islamic movements have turned into political movements. And then, all those wrong things that are linked to politics and political movements have come to be wrongly associated with Islam.

As a consequence of its inherent nature, *dawah* looks upon opponents as potential friends. With politics, it is totally the opposite. Typically, politicians see others as their opponents and enemies. This is the reason why *dawah*-related action engenders a 'mercy culture', while political agitation produces a 'hate culture'. In a society characterized by the 'mercy culture', goodness will



flourish. And where the 'hate culture' emerges, ills and violence will spread. No sort of goodness can coexist with hatred.

#### THE REAL WORK TO BE DONE

The fact of the matter is that the present-day political agitations and the violence fomented by Muslims are not just un-Islamic but are also completely useless. Recent history provides ample evidence of this.

In the first half of the 20th century, most Muslim countries were, directly or indirectly, under the control of Western powers. Then, movements for their independence were launched. Today, all these Muslim countries are politically independent. Some 60 in number, Muslim states taken together form the largest block among the members of the United Nations. Yet, despite this, Muslims carry no weight at the global political level. The reason for this is that in the ancient past political dominance counted for everything, whereas today it has been reduced to a secondary status. Today, education, knowledge, science, technology and economics are considered more important. Merely being independent in political terms does not hold much weight in today's world.

Because present-day Muslim countries are today considerably behind others in these non-political spheres, they have no place on the global map. Most of their people are still uneducated. In the fields of science and technology, they are still dependent on Western countries. In terms of modern standards, they have not achieved economic progress. Despite appearing to be politically sovereign, they are backward in all the modern spheres of life. Despite their political independence, they are, in reality, still dominated by others.

Several Muslim countries have, so they claim, witnessed an 'Islamic Revolution'—for instance, Egypt, Pakistan, Iran, Sudan, Afghanistan, etc. However, these so-called 'Islamic states' are

suffering from the same serious problems as secular Muslim states. This is because these so-called Islamic countries are as backward as the latter in the intellectual and economic fields. This is why the real work to do today is to help Muslims advance in these non-political spheres. And, undoubtedly, this work is entirely non-political. It has nothing whatsoever to do with politics and political dominance. Moreover, such non-political work is only possible while remaining within a purely peaceful framework. To be engaged in this sort of work there is no need whatsoever to spread hatred or instigate violence. This work is entirely of a positive nature, and it has nothing to do with negative activities.

## CHAPTER TEN

# *Islamic Jihad*



Jihad is a fact of life. What in English is called ‘struggle’ is what is meant by the word ‘jihad’ in Arabic. Jihad is no mysterious thing. Nor is it synonymous with violence. It is simply a word that conveys the notion of making efforts to the maximum possible extent. And so, one can speak about engaging in the jihad or struggle of life, about engaging in a jihad or struggle against prejudice. And so on.

It is a general human tendency to make efforts to achieve one’s objectives. Just as this phenomenon is denoted by different words in different languages, there are words for it in the Arabic language, too. The word ‘jihad’ also has this essential meaning. The word *sa‘ee* is a general word for ‘effort’ in Arabic, and the word ‘jihad’ indicates making great effort.

However, there is one difference to be noted here. When we ordinarily use the terms ‘effort’ or ‘struggle’, the sense of divine reward or worship is absent. But when the word ‘jihad’ became an Islamic term, this understanding of divine reward (*sawab*) or worship (*ibadat*) was also included. In other words, jihad is no ordinary effort, but, rather, an effort that is a form of worship, engaging in which one obtains divine reward. As the Quran says:

Strive for the cause of God as it behoves you to strive for it. (22:78)

## THE MEANING OF JIHAD

The root of the word jihad is *juhd*, which connotes effort of considerable intensity. The words jihad and *mujahid*, one who engages in jihad, are expressed in a related way in the Quran.

Sometimes, depending on the prevailing conditions, this action of jihad or struggle can go to the extent of contending with one's enemy. At such times, the aspect of war is also included in the understanding of the word 'jihad'—in the sense in which the word is used in that particular context, and not in the literal or dictionary sense. In this regard, Imam Raghīb al-Isfahani mentions three senses in which the word jihad is used: jihad against external foes, jihad against Satan, and jihad against one's base self, or *nafs*.

## JIHAD IN THE QURAN

The word 'jihad' and related terms are used in the same sense in the Quran as in Arabic dictionaries—that is, to indicate much effort for a certain cause or purpose. The word 'jihad' appears four times in the Quran, and on each of these occasions it is used in this very sense of effort and struggle, and not directly in the sense of war or *qital*.

In this regard, the first Quranic verse reads as follows:

Say, 'If your fathers and your sons and your brothers and your spouses and your tribe, and the worldly goods which you have acquired, and the commerce which you fear will decline, and the homes you love are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and the struggle for His cause, then wait until God fulfills His decree. God does not guide the disobedient people.' (9:24)

In this verse, the followers of Islam have been commanded to go to the extent of making sacrifices in joining the Prophet in Islam's *dawah* mission, even if this might appear to harm

their personal interests or cause economic loss or entail physical difficulty. They must, under all circumstances, remain with the Prophet in this mission. In this verse, the phrase *jihad fi sabil Allah*, or struggling in the way of God, essentially indicates the Prophet's *dawah* mission, and not war.

A second Quranic verse gives the following commandment:

Do not yield to those who deny the truth, but strive with the utmost strenuousness by means of this [Quran].  
(25:52)

In this verse, *jihad* very clearly indicates the *jihad* of *dawah*, because there can be no other meaning of doing *jihad* through the Quran.

The word *jihad* appears in a third Quranic verse in the following way:

If you have left your homes to strive for My cause and out of a desire to seek My goodwill, how can you secretly offer them (God's opponents) friendship? (60:1)

This verse was revealed before the Prophet's victory over Makkah. The Prophet did not journey from Madinah to Makkah in order to engage in war. Rather, it was actually a peaceful march, undertaken to obtain the peaceful results of the Treaty of Hudaibiya. And so, on this occasion, when the Prophet heard a Muslim say, 'Today is the day of fighting' (*al-yauma yaumul malhama*), he remarked that this was not the case, and that it was, as he put it, the 'day of mercy' (*al-yauma yaumul marhamah*).

The fourth occasion on which the word *jihad* appears in the Quran is in the form expressed in the following verse:

Strive for the cause of God as it behoves you to strive for it. . (22:78)

In this verse, the word *jihad* refers to the *jihad* of *dawah*, as is clear from the context in which it is used here.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# *The Difference between Enemies and Combatants*



The Quran tells us that even if a person appears to be one's enemy, one should deal with him in a better way than fighting with him. It may be, it says, that some day he may become one's friend. Thus, it says:

Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend. (41:34)

Elsewhere, the Quran says:

He [God] does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you on account of your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just. God only forbids you to make friends with those who have fought against you on account of your faith and driven you out of your homes or helped others to do so. (60:8-9)

A comparative analysis of these two verses indicates that the Quran distinguishes between an enemy, on the one hand, and a combatant, on the other. Even if an individual or a group appears to be one's enemy, one should still maintain good

relations with him or them so that *dawah* work can continue in a balanced manner. Apparent enmity must not be allowed to become a barrier in the way of interaction, because it is through interaction that *dawah* work continues—and *dawah* work has the power to turn even enemies into friends.

However, the issue of combatants is different from this. Combatants are those who, without provocation, have engaged in physical war against the believers. These people should be dealt with on the basis of emergency principles, or the ethics of war, so much so that one can cut off all relations with them until they desist from war.

This is an extremely important difference, which it is necessary to observe in practical life. If the believers do not understand this difference, they might start behaving in the same way with enemies as with combatants. The result of this would be that interests of the Islamic *dawah* would be hurt and the desirable *dawah* efforts would stop.

One must adopt stern precautionary measures with regard to individuals or groups who launch aggressive war, even abstaining from normal relations with them. But as far as ordinary people are concerned, one should, without considering their apparent friendship or enmity, maintain the same human relations with all of them so that the work of Islamic *dawah* may continue uninterruptedly and under no condition comes to a halt.

Islam clearly teaches us that even in a situation of an actual war one should distinguish between combatants and non-combatants. That is to say, a combatant can be fought, but never a non-combatant. In this regard, it may be argued that this principle was perhaps appropriate as far as war in the ancient past was concerned, but that today wars are fought using bombs and other modern weaponry and systems, and that, therefore, in modern wars it is not possible to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants.

The answer to this argument is that if such a situation arises that in the course of fighting non-combatants will also be killed,

then such a war must not be engaged in at all. To avoid war or to kill non-combatants in war—the first of these is the lesser evil, while the other is the greater evil. And when the choice is between a lesser evil and a greater evil, then definitely one must choose the former and discard the latter. This is what reason demands, and so does the Islamic *shariah*.

In the present-day context, if one is faced with an unfavourable situation in which if war is waged it is not possible to avoid the killing of non-combatants, then, along with this, and as a result of modern developments themselves, we must remember that a favourable situation has also emerged on a massive scale: and this is the availability of many new constructive possibilities.

These possibilities are so many that the question of winning or losing a war has now become of only secondary importance. A group may win a war but it may fall victim to terrible devastation. Another group may lose a war but yet it may gain access to peaceful avenues, using which it can achieve great success without any conflict.

This is well illustrated by modern Japanese history. Japan had to suffer a heavy defeat in the Second World War. But it did not make any military plans for its recovery. Instead, it accepted its subordinate status as a reality and began efforts for its reconstruction within a peaceful framework. This policy proved to be so successful that in just a few years, Japan's history was transformed. Japan's success in this regard was made possible because of modern scientific and technological developments.

An opposite example is provided by Palestinian history. In 1947, the Palestinian Muslims were faced with a situation which they thought justified violent action against Israel. But what was the outcome of all of this? In 1947, the Palestinian Muslims had more than half of the land area of Palestine, including the whole of Jerusalem. But the result of choosing the path of violent action was that today the Palestinians have nothing at all. In exactly the same span of time in which the Palestinians met with enormous destruction as a result of violent action Japan became a global super-power in economic terms.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

# *The Religion of Peace*



Over the centuries, much has been written about pacifism. It still remains the subject of much debate and scholarship.

Pacifism, or the love of peace or the religion of peace, is a movement that is several centuries old. It aims at completely ending war so that human societies may live in peace. One can discern stirrings of pacifism in almost all periods of human history. These stirrings have taken different forms—sometimes being expressed in religious idiom, at other times, being articulated in terms of philosophy or ethics.

Among pacifists there are some who desire peace for its own sake. They define peace as the absence of war. Other pacifists insist that peace must go hand-in-hand with justice. They consider the two to be inseparable. According to them, peace without justice is a negative peace, while peace with justice is a positive peace.

There is no doubt that peace is the most desirable of desirable things, because for any constructive or positive work peace in society is indispensable. Without peace, no progress of any sort is possible. Peace can come about only through freedom, not through coercion. A coerced peace is a form of oppression, not true peace. Genuine peace is one that emerges from intellectual revolution. The Romans, for instance, had established peace in their Empire in a limited sense, which they called *Pax Romana*. In the same way, there appeared to be some sort of peace in the erstwhile Soviet Union in the 20th century—at least this is what

the Communists called 'peace'. But both this Communist 'peace' and the 'peace' of *Pax Romana* were forms of 'coerced peace'. Needless to say, such 'peace' is not a desirable peace.

Some thinkers dream of a single world state in order to establish peace. But history testifies that it has never been possible to translate this dream into reality. The fact is that a peaceful society can be brought into being through the mental training of, and intellectual revolution in, individuals, and not through dreaming about a state that controls the whole world.

It is generally thought that religion is not of much importance in establishing peace. Some people even claim that never in history has peace been established through religion. They insist that efforts to establish a lasting peace through religious sanctions have had little effect.

But I do not agree with this interpretation of history. The fact is that this perception is based on faulty analysis. When these people think about the question of peace-building, Islam does not figure in their list. That is why they come to their conclusion on the basis of their study of religions other than Islam. This is because of the widespread misconception that Islam is a religion of violence. The reality, however, is that Islam is in the full sense of the word a religion of peace.

By 'Islam' I mean here the early period of Islam, which should be the basis for understanding Islam as it really is. In this period, two major developments occurred under the influence of Islam. First, the ending of obstacles to peace. And second, the establishment, both ideologically and practically, of a complete model of peace.

It is true that in the early period of Islam some battles were indeed fought. But the aim of these battles was precisely what is indicated by the phrase 'The last war, to end all wars'.

The Prophet of Islam was born in 570 C.E. in Makkah. He passed away in 632 C.E., in Madinah. This was a time when much of the world was under monarchical rule. This system had been

in existence for centuries. It had completely eliminated human freedom. The will of the monarch alone counted for everything.

To establish freedom and peace it was necessary to end this coercive system. The Prophet and his Companions engaged in war for a limited period so that this system could be ended. It was first brought to an end in Arabia. After this, the early Muslims were confronted by two major empires of the time, the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Empire. The Muslims were victorious over both the empires, which brought an end to the coercive rule that held sway in a large part the world. The French historian Henri Pirenne asserts that had the followers of Islam not put an end to this system of what he terms 'Absolute Imperialism' it would never have been possible for the age of freedom and peace to dawn in the world.

#### WHAT IS JIHAD?

To understand what jihad is, one must first of all understand that whatever present-day Muslims are doing in the name of jihad is not jihad. Rather, these are all violent conflicts that have been unleashed by communal or nationalist emotions and that have been wrongly given the name of 'jihad'.

Jihad is actually a name for peaceful struggle. It is not synonymous with war or *qital*. Sometimes, on the basis of expanded usage, the word jihad is used in the sense of *qital*. But in terms of their literal or dictionary meaning, the words 'jihad' and *qital* are not synonymous. To clarify this point, it is instructive to examine instances of how the word jihad is used in the Quran and Hadith.

##### 1. The Quran says:

We will surely guide in Our ways those who strive hard  
for Our cause, God is surely with the righteous. (29:69)

In this verse, seeking the Truth is referred to as jihad—that is

to say, efforts to find God, to acquire intuitive knowledge of Him and to seek closeness to Him. Obviously, this jihad has nothing to do with *qital* or confrontation.

2. The Quran says:

[The believers...] strive hard with their wealth (49:15)

According to this verse, to spend of one's wealth in God's path is also an act of Jihad.

3. The Quran says:

[...] strive with the utmost strenuousness by means of this [the Quran, to convey its message to them]. (25:52)

This verse tells us to spread the teachings of the Quran through peaceful efforts.

4. According to a *hadith* contained in the collection by at-Tirmidhi, the Prophet declared that a *mujahid* is one who, in obedience to God, engages in jihad against his *nafs*, or lower self.

From this we learn that struggling against the promptings of the lower self and remaining firmly established on the path of Truth is a jihad. Obviously, such a jihad is an inner struggle, fought in the depths of one's psyche, and not a war against an external foe fought on a physical battlefield.

5. According to a *hadith* in the collection by Ibn Majah, the Prophet said that Haj is jihad.

From this we learn that Haj is an act of jihad. If one engages in Haj in the appropriate way desired by God, it entails great struggle.

6. According to a *hadith* in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the Prophet is said to have advised:

*Fa feehima fajahid*

This means 'Strive in them [your parents]'. This indicates that serving one's parents is an act of jihad.

In this way, from various Quranic verses and traditions of the Prophet we learn that jihad is essentially a peaceful action. It refers to struggling for a desirable Divine purpose within a peaceful framework. The correct translation of the word 'jihad' is thus 'peaceful struggle'.

EASE IN HARDSHIP

The Quran tells us:

So, surely with every hardship there is ease; surely, with every hardship there is ease. (94:5-6)

This means that one aspect of the law of nature on the basis of which this world functions is that ease is always present along with difficulty. Along with obstacles, solutions are always present.

From this we learn the secret of maintaining peace in this world—and that is, to find a way out in the event of a difficult situation without engaging in confrontation. The cause for disruption of peace in any society is always this—that when an individual finds an obstacle in his path, he wants to destroy it in order to clear the way. This happens at the level of groups, too. This mentality is the biggest cause for the disruption of peace. That is why whenever people are faced with any difficulty, they should not consider it as an obstacle. Rather, they should be convinced that where there is difficulty, there is also ease; that where one's journey appears to come to a halt, a new journey can also be embarked upon.

If you stand at the foot of a mountain, you will notice streams tumbling down the slope from the peak and rushing towards the plains below. Numerous boulders stand in their way, seeming to

block their onward journey. But it never happens that they are able to stop the streams from moving ahead.

There is a simple explanation for this, which can be summarized in a single word: avoidance. That is to say, avoid confrontation and make your way ahead. And so, whenever a stream is faced with a boulder, then, without even a moment's delay, it swerves to the right or the left of the boulder and creates a way for itself and moves ahead. Instead of removing the boulder out of its way, it removes itself, as it were. In this way, without halting for even a moment, it keeps up its journey uninterrupted.

There is a wonderful lesson for us in this natural phenomenon. In this way, nature sends out a message to human beings—that instead of confronting and battling against difficulties, one should simply ignore them. Instead of trying to destroy obstacles, simply move away from them and carry on with your work. This approach can be appropriately termed 'positive status quoism'. An examination of the life of the Prophet of Islam reveals that he always adopted this very approach. The result of this was that he succeeded in ushering in a revolutionary transformation that involved such little loss of life that it can undoubtedly be called a 'bloodless revolution'.

This policy of 'positive status quoism' is the biggest guarantee of peace in the contemporary world. It would not be wrong to say that the major cause of wars is the attempt to disrupt the status quo, and that the best way to establish peace is to accept the status quo and carry on with constructive activities.

## THE NOTION OF JIHAD IN ISLAM

Jihad is an Arabic word. It simply means to make efforts. In its real sense, it is synonymous with peaceful efforts or struggle. In its expanded sense, jihad is also used for war, but in Arabic the actual word for war is *qital*, not jihad.

In present times, the word jihad is often used in the sense

of war and violence. As a result of the way the media repeatedly uses the term jihad, Islam has come to be widely thought of as a religion of violence.

It is instructive to note in this regard that in the Quran the Prophet is referred to as *rahmatul lil alameen* or a 'mercy to the worlds'. This means that the *deen* or religion that he brought was a religion of mercy for the world. So, then, how is it that such a *deen* came to have this image of being a violent religion? Two types of misunderstanding are responsible for this notion that is contrary to reality. The first relates to not distinguishing between ideology and action. And the second relates to giving an exception the status of a general rule.

It is an accepted fact that actions should be judged in the light of the ideology that is invoked for them, rather than vice versa. The contrary—to gauge an ideology in the light of actions committed in its name—is not the proper way. For instance, the proper thing to do is to judge the actions of the member-states of the United Nations in the light of the United Nations' Charter, rather than determining the meaning of this Charter in the light of the actions of these states. In the same way, it is necessary to see Islam and Muslims separately.

For instance, some Muslims worship graves of saintly personages. Seeing this behaviour, some people who worship idols might claim that there is no difference between their religion of polytheism and Islam. Naturally, this sort of comparison is not proper, because the worshipping of graves by some Muslims is a deviant action. It has nothing to do with the true teachings of Islam.

The same sort of logic applies in the case of jihad. Undoubtedly, jihad is a peaceful action. However, if, for instance, the violent actions of some medieval Muslim monarchs, such as Mahmud Ghaznavi and Aurangzeb, are labelled as 'Islamic jihads', or if the wars waged in the name of Islam in various parts of the world today by Muslims are termed as 'jihads', taking their example is obviously not the proper way to ascertain what jihad really is.

Instead, the proper, scholarly way is to take the Quran and the proven teachings of the Traditions or the practice of the Prophet as the source of Islamic ideology and to gauge the actions of Muslims in the light of these sources. Those actions of theirs that are not in consonance with the Islamic notion of jihad can be safely discarded as not being legitimate from the Islamic standpoint.

The second cause for the misunderstanding of Islam as being a violent religion relates to some Quranic verses that are related to defense. There are more than 6000 verses in the Quran. Of these, hardly 40 are related to jihad in the sense of *qital*. That is to say, less than 1 per cent.

The Quran was revealed in installments over a period of 23 years. God revealed different parts of the Quran in accordance with conditions as they emerged. This period of 23 years can be divided into two parts. The first covered a period of 20 years, and the second lasted three years. In the 20-year period, the Quranic commandments that were revealed related to faith, sincerity, purity, worship, ethics, justice, reform, and so on. In the three-year period, certain commandments related to war were also revealed—this was a time when the opponents of the Prophet of Islam had launched a one-sided aggression, which had raised for the followers of Islam the issue of defense.

This indicates that in the Quran, the status of verses about jihad in the sense of war or *qital* is that of an exception, while the status of the other verses is that of a general rule.

This difference between an exception and a rule is found universally. For example, the Gita, holy book of the Hindus, contains much wisdom. In the Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna to be ready to fight. However, if one studies the Gita as a whole, one will discover that the status of war in the Gita is that of an exception. If the exceptional verses in the Gita that are about war are alone looked at, to the exclusion of the rest of the text, and one then makes a sweeping generalization about the Gita on the basis of these verses and claims that this represents the overall teachings



of the Gita, it will undoubtedly be an unscholarly approach and a major obstacle in understanding the Gita's true import.

In the same way, it is recorded in the Bible that Jesus remarked:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. (Matthew 10:34)

If one looks at the complete teachings of Jesus, it will be clear that the above-quoted words are an exception. They certainly are not Jesus' general message or teachings. In this regard, then, to determine his message, one would have to examine his general utterances. To take some of Jesus' exceptional utterances to create a general impression or image of his message is not proper.

Avoiding taking the exception as the rule is essential to a proper scholarly way of studying any text. This method is the appropriate one for studying the Gita and the Bible, and it is also one that should be used for a full understanding of the Quran.

The concept of jihad has to be determined in the light of the Quran and the Hadith. The Quran says:

We will surely guide in our ways those who strive hard for our cause, God is surely with the righteous. (29:69)

In this verse, jihad also means efforts made in the search for Truth or to acquire intuitive knowledge of God—and in this sense it is an intellectual pursuit.

## DOES ISLAM PERMIT VIOLENCE?

Does Islam permit violence? The answer is, 'No!'

It is true that Islam permits fighting in defense, just as this is also permitted in every other religion and in every non-religious system. However, I consider violence to be a different sort of action from this, and from this perspective, there is no permission for violence in Islam at all. The way the word 'violence' is conventionally used indicates a deadly physical attack on an

enemy in order to get rid of him. There is no room for this sort of notion in Islam. If someone considers another person his enemy, it does not make it legitimate for him to resort to violence against him with a view to eliminating him.

If you study the Quran, you will realize that Islam distinguishes between an enemy, on the one hand, and an aggressor, on the other. If a group engages in one-sided and unilateral violent aggression against another group, then, according to the Quran, the latter has the right to engage in defensive action against this aggression and to respond by the use of violence to the extent necessary (22:39).

However, the issue of enemies who do not engage in such aggression is entirely different. With regard to them, Islam's teaching is precisely the same as what Jesus exhorts in the Bible:

Love your enemies. (Luke 6:27)

The Quran forbids reacting to inimical behaviour with the same sort of behaviour. In this regard, it says:

Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend. (41:34)

From this we learn that according to Islamic teachings, an enemy is not to be fought against. Rather, he is to be made into a friend. Every human being has a basic and intrinsic human nature, which may temporarily be obscured by enmity. And so, if one were to unilaterally reach out to one's enemy with kindness and goodness, the latter would revert to this intrinsic human nature of his. And then, he would no longer be an enemy, but, rather, will have become a good friend.

Ponder for a while on why people engage in violence. One reason is ideological extremism. Where there is no extremism, there is no violence. By forbidding extremism, Islam cuts off the very roots of violence. According to a *hadith* (contained in the

collections of Al-Nasai, Ibn Majah and Ahmad), in Islam there is no extremism, or what in Arabic is called *ghulu*.

Another cause for violence is anger. In Islam, anger is considered to be a grave moral failure. The Quran (42:37) describes a true believer, or *momin*, as one who, when he experiences anger, forgives. Clearly, if people were to act on this teaching of Islam and forgive others whenever they become angry with them, they would never become violent.

Yet another cause for violence is that many people think that it is a potent means to achieve goals. But the Quran seeks to put an end to this way of thinking. According to the Quran, violence is nothing but a pointless sort of negative reaction. It is not an effective and beneficial way to succeed in fulfilling one's goals.

The Quran teaches us that if we have a dispute with someone, we should try our best not to let it degenerate into a confrontation that would finally turn into violence. Rather, we should try to resolve the dispute through efforts at reconciliation at the very outset itself. According to Islam, in the event of a dispute with someone, we should resolve it by adopting a conciliatory course of action, and not by confrontation. Clearly, if this Islamic approach were adopted, even if we had a dispute with someone it would not degenerate into violence.

A *hadith* is of great help in understanding this point more clearly. According to this tradition, contained in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, God gives in response to softness what He does not give in response to harshness.

This *hadith* indicates something profound about the system of nature that God has established. And that is, that to achieve one's goals, the peaceful method is always more effective. In contrast, violent methods cause destruction and in no way prove effective in pursuing positive goals.

Here it is necessary to add that Islam and Muslims are not the same thing. Islam is the name of an ideology, while Muslims are a group that claims to have adopted Islam as its religion. Hence, the behaviour of Muslims should be gauged according to Islamic

teachings, rather than that their behaviour being considered representative of Islam.

If a Muslim or group of Muslims engages in violence, it is the individual action of that person or group. For such a person or group of persons it would be said, in the language of the Quran, that even though they claim to follow Islam, they have not accepted it from their hearts (49:14).

Some people complain that by equating Islam with terrorism, large sections of the media want to give Islam a bad name. But here I will say that this is not the fault of the media, because Muslims themselves are spreading violence in various parts of the world in the name of Islam, which they themselves hail as 'jihad'. In such a situation, the role of the media is nothing other than to report the Muslims' actions in line with the claims of Muslims themselves. Had Muslims described their wars as being fought in support of their communal or national causes instead, the media would have attributed these wars to the communal or national causes of Muslims. But when Muslims wage these wars in the name of Islam, then, quitenaturally, the media will describe them as acts of 'Islamic violence'.

In actual fact, all the teachings of Islam are based on the principles of peace. 99 per cent of the verses of the Quran are, directly or indirectly, related to peace itself. There are also a few verses that are related to war, but the point to note here is that in Islam the status of peace is that of a general principle, and that of war an exception.

#### FROM THE MILITANT TO THE NON-MILITANT AGE

In the first half of the seventh century, when Islam emerged, almost the whole world was groaning under political coercion, ruled by a system of Absolute Imperialism. This coercive system had robbed people of almost every conceivable goodness. At that

time, God commanded the end of this artificial system so that the doors of goodness could be opened to humanity.

The Quran sets forth this commandment:

Fight them until there is no more [religious] persecution,  
and religion belongs wholly to God. (8:39)

In this verse, 'persecution' or, in Arabic, *fitna*, means the ancient system of political coercion that, at the time when this verse was revealed, prevailed all over the world. And here the term 'religion', or, in Arabic, *deen*, means God's creation system based on nature. This means that the artificial system of coercion should be ended and, according to God's creation plan, the natural condition should be established wherein everyone will have freedom to act and will be able to undergo the test of life in a free environment.

Through the struggles and sacrifices of the Prophet and his Companions, the ancient coercive system was demolished, and a new system, which God wanted, emerged. This was a great change, a unique revolution that changed the face of the globe. Islam overthrew the traditional order of history.

This revolution was so vast that it could not come about all of a sudden. And so, with God's special help, it carried on in the form of a process. This revolution of the early period of Islam was a push, as it were, that was given to history. After this, history began moving in a particular direction. The process that started with Islam in the seventh century then carried on, reaching its culmination in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Thereafter, it became impossible for the old-style coercive system to be re-established in the world. This is no mere coincidence. The fact is that because of the developments in the last two centuries, the world has witnessed enormous changes that block the possibilities of old-style empires being established anywhere. The factors that allow for such empires to be established now simply no longer exist.

One can cite several examples of deterrents that oppose the establishment of political empires in the modern world.

1. In the ancient past, when a monarch captured, through force of arms, a certain territory, the inhabitants of that territory accepted his suzerainty, considering this to be the conqueror's right. This is why in those days, only a monarch, and not commoners, could defeat another monarch. But in today's world, thanks to democracy, political freedom and the concept of national government, public opinion has changed so much that no external conqueror can gain the wide social acceptance that is necessary to establish stable rule.
2. In the past, the economy was based wholly on land, and land was considered the personal property of the king. But today, the Industrial Revolution has given birth to innumerable economic resources that everyone can access. And so, it has become possible for 'ordinary' people to acquire independent economic means outside the domain of governmental control. This economic transformation has, in turn, made the possibility of governmental coercion even less possible.
3. Likewise, today there is something that can be called a 'media deterrent'. In modern times, the development of media and communications has made it possible for news about a local happening to be broadcast almost immediately across the rest of the world, so that people everywhere can come to know about it. This is a massive check that has made it virtually impossible to resuscitate the old-style political empires. Now, no emperor can do whatever he likes without fear of censure, unlike before.
4. In the same way, today we have what can be called a

‘universal deterrent’ in the form of the United Nations, Amnesty International and numerous human rights groups. No ruler can afford to turn a blind eye to them or to act against them for too long.

Following these momentous changes at the global level, human history entered a new phase. If the ancient period was what could be called ‘the Military Age’, the new age is a ‘Non-Military Age’. In the former period, military power was considered necessary to achieve any major success. But now the peaceful method has gained the status of being a completely successful method. Now, using this method alone, from start to finish, one can carry out efforts for any goal without needing to use violence at any stage. Relying only on peaceful means throughout, one can now reach the pinnacle of success. The fact is that the violent method has now become an anachronism. It is contrary to the spirit of the age.

Given present-day conditions, it can be confidently said that no longer does the age of jihad in the sense of *qital* or war still exist. Today, the time for jihad in the sense of peaceful efforts has returned to the world. This does not mean that jihad in the sense of *qital* has now been abrogated. It still remains as a commandment, as it was. The new situation has to do not with any abrogation of the commandment, but, rather, with the changes in the prevailing conditions. This follows from the generally accepted rule in Islamic jurisprudence, that with the change of time and space, some commandments can also change. It is clear, in this regard, that there is a basic distinction between change and abrogation in terms of their very nature.

This change that has taken place in present times is in favour of Islam, and it is one of the results of the revolution created by Islam itself. This happened so that opportunities for the *dawah* work could be opened up to the utmost extent. The followers of Islam now have no need to enter into any confrontation for the

sake of *dawah*. By using peaceful methods all that Islam wants can be achieved.

#### A *HADITH*

A Companion of the Prophet reported that the Prophet once narrated in a sermon many things that would happen from his time till the Day of Judgment. In this sermon, he strongly forbade his *ummah* from engaging in political rebellion. He said that even if they considered their rulers to be oppressors, and even if the latter whipped them on their backs and looted their wealth, they must still obey them. After this, the Prophet spoke about rulers among his people who would mislead, adding that when the sword entered among his people (*ummah*), it would stay until Judgment Day.

If this *hadith* is studied in the light of similar traditions, one learns that the Prophet was very strongly against violent action in political matters, and advised peaceful action. This is because once violence becomes an established tradition, it becomes exceedingly difficult to eliminate it.

There are several *hadith* in which the Prophet clearly forbade revolt against rulers. On this basis, Islamic scholars unanimously agree that it is forbidden or *haram* to revolt against an established government on any pretext.

On the one hand, Islam completely forbids violent political action against rulers. Moreover, the Prophet is said to have remarked, as a *hadith* report (contained in the collections of at-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Ahmad and al-Nasai) relates, that the best jihad is for one to speak a word of truth in front of an oppressive ruler.

If one ponders on these *hadith* reports, one learns that even if a ruler appears to be oppressive, the maximum extent to which one is permitted to go is only to verbally express one's opinion, but not to engage in agitational politics against him or to try to destroy him. In other words, in Islam only peaceful struggle is permitted. Violent struggle is not legitimate in Islam, no matter what the conditions. There are no grounds whatsoever for engaging in it.



Probably the greatest tragedy of later Muslim history is that, despite this clear commandment, a tradition of violent politics, wrongly labelled as ‘jihad’, emerged among later generations of Muslims. This mentality became so deep-rooted and widespread among Muslims that what was truly the religion of mercy came to be thought of as the religion of jihad in the sense of *qital* or war, in complete contradiction of the following Quranic statement:

And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds.  
(21:107)

Accordingly, the bulk of the literature produced by later generations of Muslims reflected this mentality, directly or indirectly. The commentaries on the Quran that were written in this later period also clearly indicate the deep-rootedness of this mentality by claiming that following the revelation of verses in the Quran that sanction war, the Quranic verses about patience and avoidance had been abrogated. *Hadith* reports were collected and compiled, and chapters about jihad were prepared in great detail. Yet, none of the books of *Hadith* had any chapters on *dawah* work. The same is true with regard to all the books of jurisprudence, or *fiqh*. The *fiqh* texts discuss jihad and related matters in very great detail, but not a single *fiqh* text has a chapter on *dawah* and related issues.

The same is true for the entire corpus of Islamic literature produced in the later period. From Ibn Taimiyah to Shah Waliullah, and from Shah Waliullah to present-day writers, almost no Muslim scholar prepared any book on the topic of *dawah*. Even if some book does have the title ‘*Dawah* and *Tabligh*’, it may actually be about politics or the rewards for pious deeds.

As a result of the mindset created among Muslims on the basis of this sort of literature, many Muslims regard people who engage in confrontation as heroes, while those who do not adopt this method do not gain any popularity among them. And so, our preachers and writers greatly highlighted the role of Imam Husain, but the role of his brother, Imam Hasan, was never highlighted in the same way. Salahuddin Ayyubi, who fought the Crusaders, won great fame among Muslims, but there is no mention in our history books of the men who, using peaceful methods, helped convert the Tartar marauders to Islam and

turned them into servants of the faith. Today, men like Osama Bin Laden who talk about violence very easily become heroes among Muslims, but if someone talks about peace and respect for humanity, he will not be able to gain general acceptance among them.

The greatest damage caused by this mentality is that humanity in general no longer remains the concern of Muslims. Muslims have come to divide God's servants into two categories: 'my community', on the one hand, and 'other communities', on the other, and they view the latter with prejudice. According to the *dawah*-oriented way of thinking, Muslims should see themselves as *da'is* and others as *mad'us*. On the contrary, in the way of thinking that is based on confrontation, Muslims consider others as their enemies and rivals.

Following the rise of the domination of Western powers, this latter way of thinking received a tremendous boost. Muslims began to feel that Western peoples had snatched from them their superior position. As a result of this, their enmity was further exacerbated and turned into hatred. And so, generally speaking, Muslims began to view other communities as their enemies.

## ISLAM IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

One aspect of the revolution that occurred through the Prophet and his Companions in the early period of Islam culminated in that very period itself. This was the completion of the revelation of the Quran and the establishment of an ideological and practical model of the Islamic way of life. This model has been preserved for all time in the form of the Quran, the Hadith, and the reports about the lives of the Prophet's Companions. It is, for all times, a reliable model of a divine way of life that people may seek to emulate.

A second aspect of the Islamic revolution in the early period of Islam was one that, because of its nature, required a gradual or step-by-step approach. That is why it reached its culmination after a long period of time. It entered human history in the form of a continuous process. It involved a transformation with very far-reaching historical implications. It required a process of change

spread over a thousand years. This process began in Makkah and Madinah, and later reached the Caliphate capitals of Damascus and Baghdad, after which it arrived in Andalusia and then spread throughout the world.

The crux of this second aspect of the Islamic revolution was the bringing about of certain transformations in human history so that it would become easier to practice Islam than in the past. The work that earlier generations of believers had to engage in in difficult conditions was made possible for later generations of believers to do in conditions of ease.

In this regard, it is important to note that in former times, large parts of the world were under a monarchical system of political coercion. Under this system, people had no freedom of thought or action. Without freedom, neither could religious commandments be acted upon, nor could the work of *dawah* be done. The Islamic revolution not only demolished this coercive system at the initial level but also set in motion a new historical process. This process reached its culmination in the contemporary period in such a way that today the believers have full freedom to both practice and propagate their faith—unless, of course, through their own foolishness they place themselves in adverse conditions.

Another aspect of this revolution was the emergence of modern means of communications as a result of technological developments. In this way, it became possible to swiftly communicate the call to the Truth to every nook and cranny of the world.

In the same way, scientific discoveries have made it possible to make known the signs of God that were hidden in the cosmos and to provide evidence for God's religion in the light of human knowledge itself.

This process reached its culmination in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And then it became possible for the believers to properly follow the religion of God in an environment of peace and freedom, and to engage in performing their duty of *dawah*, communicating the religion of God to others, without any obstruction. But, at the very same time, their incapable leaders thoroughly misguided the Muslims and got them entangled in such activities whose result

could only be that the believers could not use the many modern opportunities available to them, so much so that they remained completely unaware of them.

These blunders were essentially of two kinds. One blunder was that which resulted from the political interpretation of Islam. This interpretation gave the wrong idea to Muslims that they could fully practice Islam only when they enforced all the laws of Islam. A result of this political mentality was that the Muslim public began fighting against their rulers in the hope that, after removing them, they could enforce the laws of the *shariah*. No good whatsoever emerged from this political innovation (*bid'ah*). Rather, because of it, across the Muslim world the very same coercion and oppression that was put an end to after a long historical process was re-established as a result of the actions of Muslims themselves. The fact is that Islam desires from people the complete following of Islam, not the complete enforcement of Islam.

The second blunder was that which started off in the contemporary period in the name of jihad. Muslims had some complaints of essentially a political and economic nature against others. These complaints could have been resolved through peaceful means. But emotionally-driven Muslim leaders at once picked up weapons in the name of jihad and started violent conflicts with other communities. As a result of this so-called jihad, Muslims not only wasted the opportunities that the modern world had made available, but they also had to suffer such devastation and destruction as they had never before faced in the whole of their long history.

Because of the wrong leadership provided by Muslim leaders, Muslims lost the benefits of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It now remains to be seen if they will make amends for these terrible blunders of theirs, or if they will lose the benefits of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well, in just the same way as they lost those of the previous one.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# War in Islam



Some ‘Islamic thinkers’ claim that there are two types of war in Islam—one that they call ‘*muslihana jang*’, or war engaged in to reform others, and another that is fought in defense. This claim is totally baseless. There is no evidence to support this either in the Quran or the Hadith.

The fact is that only one type of war is allowed in Islam—and that is defensive war. Islamic teachings advocate a ‘reformist movement’, but certainly not a ‘reformist war’. This notion of a ‘reformist war’ is totally alien to the whole of the Quran and Traditions. Its source is the outpourings of poets, preachers and writers, and certainly not the Book of God or the Traditions of the Prophet.

According to a famous *hadith*, all forms of reform depend on the heart. This *hadith* relates that with the reforming of the heart, the whole body is reformed. The same thing holds true with regard to the political system. You can reform someone only by enabling reform to emerge in his heart or mind.

From this *hadith* we learn that a ‘reformist movement’ (and not a ‘reformist war’) focuses entirely on the transformation of people’s thinking and consciousness. It entails transforming people’s minds by providing them proofs. It requires telling them about heaven and hell so that their hearts are softened. It requires reminding them of God’s signs so as to awaken their

inner nature. This is the method of reform of human beings, or what can be called a 'reformist movement'.

War always aims at removing external obstacles, not at producing an inner state of higher consciousness within individuals. For the latter purpose, the appropriate method is advice, exhortation and guidance. It has nothing to do with war.

In Islam, only one sort of war is allowed—and that is defensive war. If a group commits aggression against the followers of Islam, the latter can oppose this to the extent that it is capable of doing so. This response can take different forms, such as open war, or other forms, too. But in ordinary circumstances, Islam's method is that of peace and *dawah*.

#### A STUDY

After the Hudaibiya Treaty, when conditions were stabilised, the Prophet sent out missionary groups to various places outside Madinah. One of these groups was sent to a region along the Syrian border, to the north of Madinah. This area was inhabited by Christian tribesmen who were under Byzantine rule.

There were 15 people in this missionary group, which was led by Ka'ab Ibn Umair al-Ghifari. When they reached Zate Itla, near Syria, they saw that quite a few people had gathered together. The Muslims presented these people with the message of Islam. However, they did not accept this offer, and, instead, started raining arrows on the Muslims. In this one-sided attack, 12 Muslims were martyred. Ka'ab ibn Umair al-Ghifari was injured, but managed to return to Madinah.

This assault on the Muslims by the Christian tribe on the Syrian frontier was, indirectly, an attack by Byzantine, because these Christians were under Byzantine rule. In this way, Byzantine initiated aggression against Islam.

The Prophet sent Al-Harith bin Umair Al-Azdi to the ruler of Basra along with a letter of invitation to Islam. When al-Harith reached a certain place in Syria, he met with a man called

Shurahbil Ibn Amr al-Ghassani, who asked him where he was heading. He replied that he was going to the ruler of Basra. When Shurahbil came to know that Al-Harith was sent by the Prophet, he ordered that he be killed. It is said that this murder was at the behest of the ruler of Basra.

Shurahbil was a Christian and a Byzantine official. According to international custom, his action was an act of war. Hence, the Prophet marshalled an army of 3000 men, and, in the year 8 A.H., this army marched towards Syria.

When Shurahbil got wind of the Muslim army's departure, he got together an army of some 100,000 men to fight the Muslims. Along with this, the Byzantine Emperor sent a 100,000-strong army to help him. The balance of power, in terms of numbers between the Muslims and their opponents, was very unequal. The battle that ensued did not prove decisive, but the Muslims fought so bravely that the Byzantine soldiers were in awe of the Muslims' military abilities.

Washington Irving has written a scholarly work on the Prophet of Islam. He wrote that when, with the expansion of Islam, the scattered Arab tribes got united, the Byzantine Emperor felt this Arab unity to be a threat to him. So, he decided to prepare a large army to attack what he regarded as his potential foe and crush it. Accordingly, he began gathering his forces on the borders of Arabia.

When the Prophet heard about the Byzantine army gathering on the Arabian border so that by attacking Arabia the doors of Islam could be shut, he immediately ordered that measures be taken in response. The Tabuk campaign took place after this.

The Prophet exhorted the Muslims to join this campaign in large numbers. And so, despite difficult conditions, an army of 30,000 men was assembled. The *Al-Bidaya wal-Nihaya* relates that when the Prophet would step out on a military campaign against his opponents, he would often do so quietly. But it was different in the case of the Tabuk campaign. On this occasion, he clearly

announced before the people, exhorting them to participate in the campaign.

The Tabuk campaign was an important event in the history of Islam. It has been described in great detail in the biographies of the Prophet and in historical accounts. If you study this event, you will be able to appreciate some important principles of the Prophet's method of war. Two of these principles are as follows:

1. The Prophet's military action in the course of the Tabuk campaign was for the purpose of defense. It was not an aggressive or offensive attack. From this we learn that Islam does not permit aggressive war. In Islam, war can be resorted to only when it becomes necessary for the purposes of defense.
2. Another principle that we learn from this campaign is that even while taking defensive steps, confrontation is not indispensable. If it is possible that through a show of strength the enemy will step back and abandon its aggressive intentions, then one's response should remain limited to this show of strength. It is not necessary to go to the extent of military confrontation. This is why, contrary to his general practice, the Prophet made preparations for the Tabuk campaign very openly, rather than silently. As a result of this, even before he reached the Syrian border the Byzantines had received the news that the Prophet, along with 30,000 men who were ready to sacrifice their lives, was advancing towards them.

This open expression of strength had its desired effect. The Byzantine monarch was so overawed that he ordered his soldiers to withdraw. When the Prophet heard about this, he also stopped taking any further steps.

The general policy of Islam is to abstain from war as far as possible. This policy is in accordance with Islam's essential purpose, because the purpose of Islam is to rescue people from



the path leading to Hell and to set them on the path leading to Heaven, not to kill them while they are in a state of ignorance.

A trader's eye is on a prospective customer's pocket. A warrior's eye is on a prospective enemy's neck. Contrary to this, the focus of Islam is on a person's heart. Islam aims at transforming people's hearts, so that they may partake of the mercies of their Lord.

A person may be an enemy or may follow another religion, but he is, first of all, a human being. Islam wants us to reach this inner humanity inside every person and knock on the doors of his heart. It is quite possible that, in this way, his inner self will be awakened and that he might enter the True Faith.

An example of this is recorded in Byzantine history. At the same time that the Byzantines were at loggerheads with the Muslims, a Byzantine Christian named Farwah Ibn Amr al-Juzami accepted Islam. He had been appointed by the Byzantines to rule over the Banu An-Naafirah people. When Islam emerged and spread in Arabia, Farwah, too, accepted the faith. He sent news of his acceptance of Islam to the Prophet through a messenger, along with a white mule as a gift. When the Byzantine ruler heard about this, he had Farwah imprisoned, and later had him killed. When Farwah was taken to the spot where he was to be killed, he recited the following verse:

Convey to the leader of the Muslims the news that my bones and my entire being are for my Lord. (*Seerat-e Ibn Hisham* 4/262)

Farwah was killed. It is no simple matter to be willing to be killed for remaining firm on one's principles. Such a person's very being testifies to the truth of the principles for which he gives up his life. He pens the truth of his ideology with the ink of his blood. Such a death is a source of life for thousands of people. And this is exactly what happened. Sacrifices like this one willingly made by the early Muslims made many territories enter the fold of Islam.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# *Peace in a Plural Society*



After a long struggle, the Indian subcontinent won independence in August 1947. This independence was on the basis of the ‘two nation theory’. The country had been divided, ostensibly to solve communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims. But, the Partition did not achieve this goal. In fact, it further exacerbated the conflict. Prior to the Partition, the conflict was between two communities, both of which lacked ruling power. With the Partition, it now became a conflict between two countries.

Mahatma Gandhi had, on the very first day itself, perceived how sensitive this situation was. And so, he stressed that Hindus and Muslims should learn to live together in peace and harmony and said that he would give up his life for this. However, shortly after India became independent, he was shot dead. This was undoubtedly a very great tragedy. As a result, the cause of peace and unity in the region suffered a great setback with the loss of its greatest leader.

Independence was accompanied by horrific communal violence on both sides of the newly-created border. This violence continued for many years thereafter. Finally, in order to address the issue, the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, called a national-level conference in New Delhi in October, 1961. At this conference, it was unanimously decided to set up the National Integration Council to deal with matters related to communal harmony and to make necessary suggestions.

The second conference of this Council was held in June 1962. In the speeches made on this occasion, various measures were suggested to promote communal harmony. Yet, no action was taken on these suggestions. Moreover, no more meetings of the Council were held during the rest of Nehru's life.

The third meeting of the Council was called by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, in Srinagar, in 1968. It called for promoting hatred between communities to be made a cognizable offence. Some other steps were also mooted. A few laws and rules were also passed. But still, no practical benefit emerged from all of this. And so, even today, the situation in the country is about the same as it was in 1947 as far as the issue of communalism is concerned.

What caused this failure? The basic reason is that this issue has been thought of simply as a law and order problem. However, in actual fact, the nature of the issue is different. It is not really a law and order problem. Rather, it has to do essentially with the lack of intellectual development or lack of awareness. To solve the problem, what is required is to properly educate the people and to promote proper thinking and right judgment. People should know how to make the distinction between actions that are efficacious and those that are not. They must know what they should do and what they should abstain from. They should learn the importance of thinking before acting.

This sort of aware or awakened society is one where communal harmony can flourish. It is by promoting this sort of social awareness, rather than by approaching the issue as one of law and order and reacting accordingly, that the problem of communalism can be solved. The purpose of the law in this regard is only to deal with exceptional cases of violence in society, and not for improving the general health of society. In the case of surgery, only the affected part of a patient's body is treated. But if the whole of a patient's body is affected by disease, then surgery is of no use at all.

## RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

Some basic issues that relate to the vital question of properly educating people about the issue of communalism need to be clarified. One of these is the issue of religious differences. A comparative study of the various religions shows that there are clear differences between the different religions. For instance, the beliefs of some religious communities are based on monism, while those of some other communities are based on monotheism. Some religions preach the discovery of truth by oneself, while others believe that the Truth is revealed by God through messengers.

Some people think that these religious differences and distinctions are themselves the root cause for all communal conflicts. They believe that communal harmony can come about only when these differences are somehow destroyed. 'Bulldoze them all!' some extremists say, but of course this is so completely impractical that it is not even worth talking about.

Faced with the reality of religious differences, some people seek to somehow or the other 'prove' that all religions are, actually, one and the same. A notable such person was the late Dr. Bhagwan Das (1869-1958), a very capable man. After a detailed study of all the major religions, he wrote a book, running into almost 1000 pages, titled *Essential Unity of All Religions*. He claimed that the teachings of all the religions are the same.

But seeking to prove that all religions are one and the same by extracting portions from different scriptures is like someone culling portions from the Constitutions of different countries and publishing them together in a single volume and then claiming that all the Constitutions of the world are the same and that they have the same rules and clauses and provisions! This sort of imaginary universal Constitution may greatly please the author of such a book, but it will not be acceptable to even one single country! Every country will reject it. The same holds true for books like the one written by Dr. Bhagwan Das. Books of this

sort may give their compilers great satisfaction, but they cannot be acceptable to the followers of the different religions.

I have studied this issue in detail and have found that to claim that all religions are one and the same does not correspond to reality. In actual fact, there are so many differences between the different religions that it is simply impossible to prove them to be the same. For instance, one religion says that God is one. Another religion talks of two gods. A third religion says there are three gods. Yet another religion claims that there are 330 million gods. Some religions insist that the number of gods is simply beyond counting. In such circumstances, to claim that the teachings of all the religions are one and the same may appeal to the minds of people who are given to wishful thinking, but it is not logical, and nor is it factual.

Even if, by some means or the other, it could be argued that the scriptures of the different religions are, in actual fact, the same, the problem of differences will still remain unresolved. This is because there are multiple and conflicting interpretations of each of these scriptures, and these multiple interpretations lead to the formation of numerous sects within each religious community.

The fact is that such difference or diversity is not just related to religion. The entire world is based on the principle of difference and variety. These differences are so pervasive that no two things or people are without some difference or the other. As someone has very rightly said, 'Nature abhors uniformity.'

When differences are themselves a law of nature, how can religion be an exception to this rule? The fact is that, just as differences are found in everything else in the world, so also there are differences between one religion and another. We have not thought it necessary to do away with differences in other matters, but, instead, have agreed to disagree. We should adopt this same practical formula in matters of religion as well. Here, too, we should lay stress on unity, despite differences. The fact is that

there is only one way to solve the issue of religious differences, and that is: 'Follow one, and respect all.'

#### CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The issue of cultural differences is also one that needs to be considered. Social groups are characterized by cultural differences. Some people regard these differences as the root of all conflicts. They argue that to end conflict, these differences in the name of culture should be completely wiped out and a society characterized by cultural unity should be established.

This proposal, too, is impractical. Culture cannot be made or destroyed by individuals at will in this way. A culture always emerges from a long historical process. It cannot be invented by someone sitting in an office and preparing a 'cultural plan'.

In the wake of the Second World War, numerous ideologues emerged in different parts of the world. They began calling for the establishment of a monocultural society in order to promote national unity. This monocultural approach was promoted, for instance, in Canada, but it proved impractical and was soon abandoned. Canada has now officially adopted multiculturalism as its policy and has dropped monoculturalism for good.

The same happened in the USA as well. After the Second World War, a movement to promote what was called 'Americanisation' emerged, which sought to impose a single culture on all Americans. But it failed, because people realised it was impractical. And so, it was abandoned, and now in America, too, multiculturalism is the recognised policy.

The fact is that cultural differences are not a matter of differences only between two communities. Such differences can also be found among, and between, different sub-groups in every community. That is why it is not necessary to make changes in religious teachings in order to promote unity and harmony between different religions. For this purpose, the only thing

necessary is to promote among the followers of different religions a commitment to ‘live and let live.’

However, some people still advocate this failed experiment of monoculturalism and have given it the name of ‘social engineering’. Through this they seek to respond to the fact of cultural diversity among different communities by calling for the restructuring of their culture so that society may be free from cultural differences and all citizens of the state share a common culture.

No matter what name it is called by—‘social engineering’ or ‘cultural nationalism’ or whatever—there have been no positive results of the effort to build and impose a single culture on people. It is tantamount to nothing less than what could be called ‘cultural bulldozing’. It is thoroughly impractical and unrealistic. And to pursue anything that is impractical from the point of view of natural laws is simply a waste of time.

In this regard, my difference with the ‘cultural nationalists’ or ‘social engineers’ is not on ideological, but, rather, practical grounds. I do not say that their aim is wrong, but, rather, that what they want to bring about is simply impractical. Supposing it became possible for everyone in the country to start to speak one language, to follow one culture and to have the same traditions and way of life. If such a thing were to happen, I would certainly give this my seal of approval. But the fact remains that, in line with the laws of nature and history, this sort of uniformity is simply impossible. It has never been possible in the past, and nor will it be possible in the future. Cultures always develop according to their own laws. It is simply impossible to sit in an office and invent a cultural map of your choice and then go about imposing it on every community in the country.

So, in this regard, we should do exactly what we generally do with regard to all other divisive issues—we should solve the problem on the basis of the principle of tolerance. One should deal with the matter using methods that accord with factual reality, and not through confrontational methods. Using confrontational

methods in this matter will only further exacerbate the problem, rather than solve it.

In this context, there is an important issue that needs to be clarified with regard to the specific Indian case. Some people claim that Hindus are loyal to India, their holy places being located here. They claim that it is different with the Muslims of the country, whose centres of devotion—for instance, Makkah and Madinah—are located outside India. That is why, they allege, Muslims can never be loyal to India.

I see this issue differently, however. Suppose a Hindu is devoted to a temple in Somnath. This does not mean that he cannot be devoted to a temple located in Ayodhya as well. Likewise, if a person loves his mother, it surely does not mean that he has no love for his father.

Similarly, if an Indian Muslim has an emotional bonding with Makkah and Madinah, it does not mean that he has no such bonding with India. To think otherwise is to underestimate man's emotional capacity. Any person, be he or she Hindu or Muslim or anything else, is an expression of nature, and nature has made every human being with enough inner spaciousness to contain within him or her multiple loves and loyalties at the same time.

This is such a basic fact of life that every person can testify to it personally. Every man and woman knows this from his or her own experience. As a Western thinker very aptly put it, 'I am large enough to contain all these contradictions.'

## RELIGION AND POLITICS

Very often, religion is invoked in communal conflicts. Repeatedly, political and communal controversies are turned into religious controversies, and then people's passions are roused, leading to confrontation and violence between communities. Because of this, many people have become opponents of religion itself. They



say that human beings have no need for religion at all, and that, hence, religion must be destroyed. Without this, they contend, social unity is impossible.

This, however, is an extremist response to an extremist stance, a secular extremist reaction to religious extremism, which is neither possible nor useful. The fact is that religion is in itself not a problem. It is a vital part of human life. It is the political exploitation of religion by certain opportunists that is the problem. Hence, it is the exploitation of religion, rather than religion itself, that needs to be eliminated.

Religion has two dimensions: personal and collective. The personal dimension of religion includes beliefs, worship, morality and spirituality. The collective dimension of religion includes its political and social commandments. In this matter, the right approach would be, in general conditions, to lay stress only on the personal dimension of religion. The entire focus should be on enkindling the spirit of religion.

As far as the political and social commandments of religion are concerned, they should not be taken up until such time as the entire society becomes favourable towards them. These commandments can be established only through the collective consent of the entire society. That is why no practical steps should be taken as far as these rules are concerned as long as the collective consent of society is not willingly given.

This approach can be termed a practical division between religion and politics. That is to say, while considering politics, at the ideological level, to be part of religion, in the face of reality the practical enforcement of the political commandments of religion frequently need to be delayed or postponed. This is a wise approach. The advantage of this approach is that in this way the demands both of religion and of politics can be fulfilled: those of religion, in the present, and of politics, in the future. On the other hand, if this approach is not adopted and both aspects of religion are simultaneously highlighted, the result will be that the demands neither of religion nor of politics will be fulfilled.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH INDIA

In India, the problem of communal conflict is predominantly, though not entirely, a North Indian phenomenon. In South India, communal harmony still prevails in most parts. Most communal riots take place in the north, while very few cases of such violence are reported from the south. It is very important to study this difference between North and South India, because it can provide us with valuable guidance.

Moreover, it is not that all parts of North India are equally affected by communal violence. Most such violence happens in urban areas. Very few communal riots take place in villages. It is instructive to study why this is so. Such a study would not only provide us with explanations for the phenomenon of communal violence, but it would also offer us appropriate solutions to such violence and measures for promoting an environment of inter-community harmony.

With regard to communal harmony, there are some issues that need to be looked at. For instance, Muslims complain about some beliefs of the Hindus. I will not discuss these here. But in this regard I would advise Muslims that, in accordance with Islamic principles, they should adopt the method of tolerance and avoidance of conflict. On the other hand, there are some complaints or misunderstandings that Hindus have with regard to Muslims. I would like to elaborate on this matter and explain certain Islamic terms that are a cause, or that can become a cause, for misunderstandings between the two communities.

Here I will just briefly mention an important point. Ordinarily, if a Muslim does something wrong, Hindus speak and write against him. In the same way, if a Hindu does something wrong, Muslims speak and write against him. This method is, from the point of view of reform, completely useless. It only pleases one party, which thinks it to be advocacy in its favour, but it has no positive impact whatsoever on the other party.

Contrary to this, the proper and beneficial approach is that

if a Muslim does something wrong, Muslim *ulema* intellectuals should speak and write against it. Likewise, if a Hindu does something wrong, Hindu leaders should speak and write against it. It is just as when a child does something wrong, his parents are the first to admonish him. His parents do not wait for their neighbours to come to their house and scold their child. In any case, even if these people do come and scold their child, it will not have any positive impact on him.

It is human nature that one generally takes the admonishment of people one considers one's own in a positive way, and, accordingly, reforms oneself. In contrast, one generally takes the criticism of people one considers as the 'other' as an insult to one's honour, and so it does not have a positive impact. It is very necessary to keep this practical wisdom in mind with regard to the issue of community unity.

#### COMMUNITY, NATION AND NATIONALISM

In the context of what we are discussing here, there are certain Islamic terms whose clarification is necessary. Clarifying their real import can help in promoting better relations between Muslims and others. On the other hand, a wrong understanding of these terms can only further magnify the distance between them.

One of these terms is *qaum*. From the Quran we learn that every prophet addressed his disbelieving addressees as *ya qaumi*, which can be translated as 'O my people!' From this we learn that the believers and non-believers can share the same nationality, to use a modern term. The fact is that one's nationality is related with one's homeland, not with one's religion. The term to denote adherence to a common religion is *millat*, while the term to denote sharing a common homeland is *qaumiyat*. In today's world, one's homeland is considered to be the basis of one's nationality. This is also the teaching of Islam. According to Islam, too, one's nationality or *qaumiyat* is based on one's homeland.

In this regard, the ‘two-nation’ theory—the claim that the Hindus and Muslims of India are two separate nations—is an un-Islamic theory. The ‘two-nation’ theory creates in the minds of Muslims the false belief that they are a separate nation or *qaum* and that other Indians belong to a different nation. The true Islamic stance is that the Muslims of India should regard themselves as belonging to the same nation or *qaum* as other, non-Muslim Indians. They should address other Indians as ‘O my people!’, as all the prophets did.

The Quran says:

Mankind! We have created you from a male and female,  
and made you into peoples and tribes, so that you might  
come to know each other. (49:13)

The term ‘peoples’ in this verse indicates groups that are derived from sharing a common homeland, while the term ‘tribes’ indicates groups based on racial commonality. According to the Quran, both of these types of grouping of people are simply for the sake of coming to know each other, and not for indicating relationships of belief or religion.

In the period just before the Partition, Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, a well-known Indian Muslim scholar, contended, ‘In the present age, people’s nationality is determined on the basis of their homeland.’ This statement was in itself correct. But I think that adding the clause or condition ‘In the present age’ was improper. The fact is that nations or *qaums* have always developed on the basis of their homeland. In the contemporary age, the only difference is that, as in many other matters, new methods of determining and identifying one’s nationality have begun to be used. For instance, these days, one’s nationality is specified in one’s passport, while passports were not used earlier. There are also new legal definitions of nationality for determining international rights. And so on. Hence, one can rightly say that today the term *qaum*, or nation, is used in essentially the same way as it was used in earlier times, the only difference being that

earlier it was employed in a limited sense, while today it is used in a more expanded sense.

Some people interpret nationalism in an extremist fashion, so much so that they make it out to be synonymous with religion. But this is a case of ideological extremism. One can cite instances of this sort of ideological extremism with regard to religion, too. For instance, some modern Muslim thinkers have interpreted Islam in such an extremist manner that all systems other than Islam have been branded as *taghuti nizams* or 'false or evil systems'. These writers have declared it *haraam* or completely forbidden for Muslims to cooperate with such systems. They have even declared it *haraam* for Muslims to seek education under such so-called 'false systems', to take up government employment, to vote in elections, and to approach the country's courts to have their disputes solved.

This notion of 'false systems' was the product of some extremist minds. It does not have anything in common with the real Islam. This is why practical realities have compelled many of those who once upheld this erroneous ideology to distance themselves from it in their own personal lives. And so, all these people have, in actual practice, abandoned this extremist theory, without announcing it as such.

Exactly the same thing happened in relation to the issue of nationalism. Some extremist Western thinkers had expanded the notion of nationalism to the extent that they presented it in the form of a complete religion by itself. But when this notion had to contend with practical realities, it became completely untenable. And so, in practical terms, nationalism is now understood in somewhat the same natural manner as it is portrayed in the Quran.

Most Indian Muslim leaders who emerged in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century could not properly appreciate these matters. They thought that the unnatural and extremist understandings about nation and territorial nationalism were what nationalism was actually about, and so they declared nationalism to be un-Islamic.

For instance, the famous Indian Muslim poet Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) took the extremist understandings of nation and territorial nationalism as synonymous with nationalism as such, and declared:

*Is daur mein mai aur hai jam aur hai jam aur  
Tehzib ke azar ne tarashwaye sanam aur  
In taza khudaon mein bada sabse watan hai  
Jo pairahan uska hai woh mazhab ka kafan hai*

In this age, the wine is different and so is the wine-cup.  
The Azar of civilization has chiseled a new idol.  
Among these new gods the biggest is the homeland.  
Its dress is the shroud of Religion.

This understanding of nation and territorial-nationalism is undoubtedly baseless.

The strange thing is that in this period, most *ulema* and Muslim intellectuals were making out issues of political import to be supposedly so vital to Islam as to appear to be a question of life and death for it. The fact of the matter, however, is that no political upheavals—no political successes or downfalls—can ever become a challenge to the eternal nature of Islam. But this fact escaped many Muslim leaders. For instance, when, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the Indian Muslim writer Shibli Numani, bemoaning this, wrote:

*Zawale daulat-e usman zawale shar-o-millat hai  
Aziz-o-fikr-e-farzand-o-ayal-o-khanama kab tak*

The decline of the Ottoman Empire is the decline of the Islamic *shariah* and the Muslim *millat*.

O my friends, till when will you be concerned only  
about your children and families?

This understanding, that the collapse of a certain government

is synonymous with the decline of the Islamic *shariah* and the Muslim *millat*, is certainly baseless. Such a thing has never happened in the past, and nor can it ever happen in the future. The period of the four rightly-guided Caliphs came to an end, but the peaceful expansion of Islam still carried on. The journey of Islam continued in the same way even after the Umayyad and Abbasid Empires collapsed, and also after Muslim rule in Spain and that of the Fatimids in Egypt and the Mughals in India ended. The decline of these Muslim dynasties could not, and did not, cause any decline of Islam.

In the same way, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century a number of extremist ideologies emerged—for instance, Communism, Nazism, Nationalism, and so on. But the end result of all of these was that the law of nature rebutted their extremist aspects, and, finally, whatever survived of them was what was desirable according to the law of nature. This eternal law removes extremist ideologies and replaces them with moderate ideas.

#### THE CONCEPTS OF *KUFR* AND *KAFIR*

Some people claim that the notions that Muslims have of *kuf*r and *kafir* are a permanent stumbling block to communal harmony. However, this claim is based on a misunderstanding. It has nothing to do with the Quran.

The literal meaning of the word *kuf*r is to ‘deny’, and *kafir* means ‘one who denies’. It is important to note that these two terms are used in the Quran in the context of narratives about the prophets. Moreover, *kuf*r is a trait of a particular individual; it is not the ethnic or inherited name for a social group. The investigation of *kuf*r or ‘denial’ with regard to a particular person happens when he has been invited to the faith in the manner that the prophets did, and this is carried on till its culmination by presenting proper evidence and requisite proofs—or what is called *itmam al-hujjah*. Without following this prophetic approach

of *dawah*, it is not proper to declare that a particular person has engaged in *kufir* or the act of 'denial'.

In the same way, it is not legitimate for ordinary people to announce, in a clearly determined and specific manner, that a particular person or group of persons has become *kafir*. The act of *kufir* is, in reality, related to one's intentions, and only God knows the reality of people's intentions. That is why it is only for God, or, for the prophets, on the basis of the knowledge given to them by God, to declare in a clearly determined and specific manner that a particular person has become a *kafir*. Accordingly, there is just one such reference in the whole of the Quran where certain people in the ancient past were clearly referred to as *kafirs*:

*Qul ya ayyuhal kafiroom*

Say, 'You who deny the Truth [...]' (109:1)

This clear definition is not used in the Quran for any other group. That is to say, that the Quran does mention the act of *kufir*, but it does not accord the status of being *kafir* to an individual or group.

#### THE TERM *DAR UL-HARB*

The term *dar ul-harb* or 'Abode of War' is certainly used in the *fiqh* or legal tradition that was developed in the Abbasid period, but it is not mentioned in the Quran and Hadith. This clearly shows that the term was coined by jurists based on their reasoning (*ijtihad*), and that it is not from the original Islamic sources. And that which is a product of human reasoning and reflection can be either right or wrong.

In my opinion, the term *dar ul-harb* is an error of *ijtihad*. Many different developments took place at the time of the Prophet, but he never declared any territory as *dar ul-harb*. If one engages in *ijtihad* based on the Quran and Hadith and coins a relevant



term, it can be just one: and that is, *dar ud-dawah* or 'Abode of Invitation to accept the Faith'. This is what is in accordance with the spirit of Islam. Islam regards all people as *mad'us*, or people who are to be invited to accept the faith, irrespective of whether their relations with the followers of Islam are peaceful or not. Hence, in accordance with the authentic understanding of Islam, only two terms are proper with regard to the issue being discussed here. One is *dar ul-islam* ('Abode of Islam), and the other is *dar ud-dawah*. Other than these, all other terms that are used in the *fiqh* tradition to categorise territories (such as *dar ul-harb*, *dar ul-kufr* ['Abode of Infidelity'], *dar ut-taghut* ['Abode of Falsehood'], etc.) represent, in my view, errors of *ijtihad*.

#### THE CONCEPT OF JIHAD

As a result of wrong interpretation by some Muslims, jihad has come to be understood as war engaged in to 'reform' others (or what is called in Urdu *muslihana jang*). Such people say that Muslims are God's *khalifas*, or deputies on earth, and that it is the responsibility of Muslims as God's deputies to establish the rule of God in the world. They think they are charged with the God-given task of making people obey God's commandments. They call this war jihad.

This understanding of jihad is undoubtedly without any basis. It has nothing to do with the Quran, the Hadith, and the Prophet's practice.

A 'reformist war', from the point of view of its consequences, promotes nothing but *fasad* or corruption and strife. In society, everyone has the right to peacefully express his or her views, but the idea that one can use physical force to 'reform' others is simply unacceptable when it comes to relations between communities and countries. In any particular society, and also at the inter-community and international levels, no group of people can arrogate to itself a right that it is not willing to let others also

enjoy. If a particular group wants to have the right to engage in 'reformist war', then, obviously, it must be ready to grant the same right to other groups as well. If this happens, the result would be that each group would start warring with the others, all in the name of self-styled 'reform'. Needless to say, no 'reform' can ever come about in this way. Rather, the only result will be never-ending strife.

The fact is that there is only one legitimate form of war, and that is war that is fought in defense. If a nation crosses its geographical boundaries and openly attacks another nation, the latter has the right to reply by fighting in defense. Other than in this case, there are no grounds for war in Islam at all. This principle is as firmly accepted in Islam as in many other systems. With regard to this principle, there is no difference between Islam and non-Islamic systems.

In this regard, there is an issue that needs particular attention. It relates to the past, to the period of the age of Monarchy. In this period, much of the world was ruled by various dynasties. At that time, the monarch was considered to be above the law. He thought he could do whatever he pleased. Because of this, every king engaged in deeds that were clearly morally or legally improper. This was the case with Muslim kings in ancient India, too. For instance, Mahmud Ghaznavi demolished the Hindu temple at Somnath and looted its gold. Likewise, it is said that Aurangzeb destroyed a Hindu temple in Benaras and built a mosque in its place. And so on.

Such deeds were committed by kings in every country in those days. But all these were later treated as just a part of ancient history and did not become a cause for continuous conflict between communities. It is only in India that incidents like these became a cause for continuing bitterness between communities—Hindus and Muslims—leading to repeated communal riots. They became a major obstacle in promoting communal harmony.

The basic reason for this exceptional case of India in this regard is, I believe, that the Indian Muslim *ulama* and intellectuals have

labelled Muslim dynasties in India as 'Islamic' dynasties. They began considering them as a chapter in the history of Islam. In actual fact, however, their rule was simply that of certain Muslim families. It is completely wrong to consider their rule as the rule of Islam. These two things are totally different. But because this difference was not kept in mind, the events that were associated with the reign of particular Muslim dynasties came to be associated with the name of Islam.

Another terrible blunder that Muslims made because this basic distinction was not borne in mind was that they perceived the reign of these Muslim rulers as a source of Islamic pride. They began to view it as a symbol of the domination of Islam. On the other hand, Hindus began thinking on the lines of what is called 'righting historical wrongs'. Both these stances resulted in mutual bitterness. When Muslims made the memory of the Muslim kings a source of pride, consciously or otherwise this became a part of what they thought of as their religious history. And, on the other hand, Hindus perceived their actions as historical misdeeds and began trying to redress them.

In this regard, both sides, I believe, have made mistakes. The mistake of the Muslims is that because they have given this history of these Muslim rulers a supposedly religious status, they are not willing to re-examine it. And, on the other hand, the mistake of the Hindus is that they are not willing to forget history. They insist on the righting of historical wrongs, even if this results in destroying the potentials and prospects of the present.

I believe that on this matter both sides need to be realistic. Muslims should not give the Muslim rulers of the past the status of 'Islamic rulers'. Instead, they should simply characterise their rule as that of certain families. They should disown the un-Islamic and immoral behaviour of these Muslim rulers. They should openly condemn them for this—be they Mahmud Ghaznavi or Aurangzeb or anyone else.

On the other hand, Hindus should forget the past, in line with the saying, 'The past is past'. They should desist from

emotionalism in this regard and adopt a pragmatic and realistic approach. They should remember that there have always been historical wrongs, yet no one has ever been able to remedy any of them. The theory about righting historical wrongs is undoubtedly unwise. It is tantamount to ruining one's present in the name of correcting the past. This view is against the principles of nature. People who think in this way will, in the name of salvaging their past, only lose their present, and their future, too.

Unfortunately, this is precisely what has happened in India. Countries that, forgetting the bitterness of their past, have sought to build their present have achieved brilliant successes. One example of this is Japan. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Japan did not seek to correct the wrongs committed against it by America. The result of this was that Japan is today an economic superpower. In contrast, in India people have tried to rectify historical wrongs, but this has only further exacerbated the country's backwardness.

A necessary condition for national progress is that such progress should be treated as the main issue, and all other issues should be given a secondary status. The principal concern of citizens of any given country should be the unhampered continuance of national progress. Emotionally-driven issues and controversies should never be allowed to come in its way. This is the only way for true national progress to become a reality. Without this, it is impossible to have peace.

There is a well-known story about a judge who, one day, had to hear the very strange case of two women fighting over a newly-born child, each claiming it as hers. Neither of them had any sort of legal proof of being the child's mother. This was a difficult test for the judge. Finally, he ruled that the child should be sliced into two, and that each woman should get a part of the child's body.

When the judge gave his verdict, it made no impact on the woman who falsely claimed to be the child's mother. But the real

mother burst out screaming: 'Don't kill the child!' Give it to this other woman, if you want!'

This is the true test of love. Those who have true love for their country must raise their voices, just as this woman did, and declare, 'We cannot bear to see our country being destroyed! We have forgotten whatever happened in the past so that we can fully use the opportunities of the present and build a glorious future for our country!'

Peace and unity are possible only when underlain by tolerance. It is a principle of nature that differences will inevitably arise between individuals and groups. They are an indispensable part of life. This is why communal harmony cannot come about by eliminating differences. Rather, it is possible only when tolerance is shown.

The fact is that to attempt to eliminate differences is to act against not a particular community, but, rather, against a universal law of nature. No individual or group is so strong that it can fight with, and win, against nature. That is why pragmatism demands that, as far as the issue of religious and cultural differences is concerned, we must abide by the principle of tolerance, rather than engage in confrontation. We need to tolerate differences so that unity may be established, because seeking to establish unity by eliminating differences is simply impossible.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# *Hijacking and Hostage-Taking: Heinous Crimes*



Hijacking is, without doubt, *haram* or forbidden in Islam. No matter from which angle it is looked at, it is definitely forbidden according to the *shariah* and is a major crime. It is a crime that simultaneously involves many criminal activities, including ‘highway robbery’, hostage-taking, killing innocents, looting or damaging other people’s property, and so on.

‘Highway robbery’ entails attacking a person who is in a vulnerable position and inflicting harm on him. In earlier times, ‘highway robbery’ was a common occurrence. Related to this was piracy on the seas. And in modern times we have hijacking in the air. All these forms of ‘highway robbery’ are equally forbidden or *haram* in Islam. An individual or group that, directly or indirectly, engages in this sort of action is, in the eyes of Islam, a major criminal.

Hostage-taking entails capturing innocent people and using them to bargain to have one’s demands met. This practice was known in the ancient past, but today it has become almost an art in itself. There is no doubt that it is a terrible sin, as well as utter cowardice. If you have a grouse against someone and you take revenge for this on someone else—this is completely forbidden or

*haraam* in Islam. Islam does not allow for innocent people to be harmed, no matter on what grounds.

It is clear from the Hudaibiya Treaty that the Prophet entered into that if an opposing party takes a Muslim as hostage, it is still impermissible for Muslims to take their men as hostages. This is because this would be tantamount to taking revenge on an innocent person. And oppressing an innocent person in order to extract or express revenge is not permissible in the Islamic *shariah*.

Sometimes, hijackers kill innocent passengers in pursuing their criminal goals. This is undoubtedly a terrible crime. In the Quran, God says:

Whoever killed a human being—except as a punishment for murder or for spreading corruption in the land—shall be regarded as having killed all mankind (5:32)

Those who slaughter innocent passengers or cause them any distress despite this Divine declaration have no fear of God. And people who are bereft of the fear of God are definitely also bereft of faith.

Obviously, passengers travelling on an airplane are innocent. They have no prior dispute or conflict with the hijackers. And so, to hijack a plane and torment, and even kill, innocent passengers—all these are completely forbidden, or *haraam*, in Islam.

It is completely forbidden in Islam to deceive anyone, no matter for what purpose. Hijacking is a form of complete deception. Hijackers deceive other people at every stage of their operation. They procure false passports and may use fake currency; they deceive airport staff and smuggle on board dangerous weapons; they cheat the security staff. All these actions entail lying and deception, which are very serious crimes in Islam.

Islam simply does not permit deception, and so, it is completely un-Islamic to pursue one's aims by deceiving others, so much so that if a Muslim country has to go to war with another country,

it is incumbent on it to make an open declaration of its decision. Proxy war is not at all permissible in Islam. To pursue one's aims by resorting to lies and deception—which is what hijacking entails—is thus an enormous crime according to Islam. A *hadith* in the *Sahih Muslim* relates that a person who engages in deception is not to be counted among the Muslims.

Hijacking entails loss, or the threat of loss, of life and property. Taking control of an airplane involves seizing someone else's property. It also involves killing, or threatening to kill, scores of innocent people. For the hijackers, hijacking is synonymous with committing suicide, which in itself is such an enormous sin that according to the Islamic *shariah*, a person who deliberately kills himself dies a *haraam* death. And, according to Islam, there can be no worse death than such a death.

There have been cases in recent years of hijackers claiming that their action is part of what they call an 'Islamic jihad'. Their claim is criminally false. Islamic jihad in the path of God is engaged in for purposes of defense, while the so-called wars that these hijackers are waging are for the sake of power and pelf. Such a war definitely cannot be a jihad in the cause of God.

Another point to keep in mind is that jihad in the sense of *qital*, or war, is the prerogative only of an established government and not of members of the general public. But, today, it is precisely such individuals who are behind cases of hijacking and other forms of violence unleashed in the name of jihad. According to Islam, these people simply do not have the right to do so. For such individuals to launch wars is absolutely forbidden, or *haraam*, in Islam.

An established government can resort to defensive war if it is the victim of aggression, but even a defensive war of this sort would be considered legitimate in Islam only when it is fought after making an open declaration. To launch any sort of proxy war without issuing such a declaration is in no way legitimate in Islam.

Islam divides rights into two: *huquq Allah* ('rights of God'),



and *huquq ul-ibaad* ('rights of God's creatures'). The former refers to the responsibilities that a person should fulfill in relation to God. If he errs with regard to the 'rights of God', to atone for this it is enough for him to ask for forgiveness from God.

But the issue of *huquq ul-ibaad* is very serious. If a person errs in a matter related to the 'rights of God's creatures'—say, by committing an offence against another human being—then he cannot atone for it only by asking forgiveness from God. Along with asking God for forgiveness, it is incumbent on him to also ask forgiveness from the concerned person and to compensate for the damage he has inflicted on him or her.

Hijacking undoubtedly involves a violation of the 'rights of God's creatures'. It is a form of oppression against fellow humans. It is incumbent on hijackers to atone for their crimes, otherwise they would be considered to be unpardonable criminals in God's eyes, even if they perform various Islamic acts of worship.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# *Peace in Kashmir*



I have been writing on Kashmir for many years now—from 1968 onwards. From the very outset, I have been of the firm view that unrealistic politics have devastated Kashmir, and that now, through practical and realistic politics, a progressive Kashmir can come into being.

The Kashmiri Muslims seem to have become upset with almost everyone and are living in an atmosphere of mistrust. It is, however, possible, for the Kashmiris – if they so desire – to start a new life at any moment. But for this there are two necessary conditions. Firstly, the Kashmiris must admit that they are themselves responsible for the unpleasant situation they find themselves in today. As long as they continue to blame others for this situation, it will not be possible for them to start a new life.

The second indispensable condition is that the Kashmiris must step out of their imaginary world and start living in the real world. In other words, they must come out of the wishful thinking that their incapable leaders have been instigating. Adopting methods that are in harmony with present-day conditions, they should make plans for their progress.

Conditions have decreed that the Kashmiri Muslims must willingly, and not out of compulsion, take the bold step of accepting that Fate has ordained them to be a part of India and that now they have no option but to willingly accept this decision. Furthermore, they must accept that there is nothing at all wrong

in this, and that it is definitely good for them from every angle. India is a big country. It enjoys freedom and democracy. It is home to almost 200 million of their Muslim co-religionists. Most of the bigger Islamic institutions in the Indian Subcontinent are located in India. All across India are scattered the memories of a thousand and more years of Muslim presence in the region, which continue to provide a sense of determination to the country's Muslims. Above all, India provides enormous opportunities for *dawah*. A *hadith* report (contained in the collections by Imam al-Nasai and Imam Ahmad) gives the good news of salvation in the Hereafter for this task of *dawah*.

Once when I was in Karachi for a few days, I met a Muslim industrialist who told me that Muslims in India were in a better position than Pakistanis. When I asked him why, he answered, 'Pakistan is a small country. If we manufacture something here, we have a very small potential market for it. In contrast, India is a vast country. If you produce something there, you have a huge market you can sell it in.'

What this Pakistani industrialist said to me has become a fact of life. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Muslims of India have emerged as the most progressive Muslim community in the whole of South Asia. This is no exaggeration, and one can easily prove it by a comparative study.

If the Muslims of Kashmir were to willingly and wholeheartedly join India, they would find that many opportunities for great progress would be opened up to them. The possibilities that they would enjoy in India to progress economically, educationally and in other ways are not available anywhere else in the region.

Moreover, even in terms of politics the Kashmiri Muslims have great opportunities to progress in India. Some time ago, an article I wrote was published in various Urdu, Hindi and English papers. Therein I stressed that if the Muslims of Kashmir were to abandon their policy of confrontation and wholeheartedly accept India and become part of it, it is quite possible that one day in the future, democratic India's first Muslim Prime Minister

would be a Kashmiri Muslim. I have absolutely no doubt about this.

#### THE KASHMIRI LEADERSHIP

I have been seriously pondering on the Kashmir issue for decades now. With God's blessings, the views that I held about the subject when I started off still appear to me to be valid. With God's grace, I have never felt the need to change them.

I have been writing on Kashmir from 1968 onwards. Probably my first article on the subject was published in the 14th June, 1968 edition of the Urdu weekly *Al-Jamiat*, the official organ of the Jamiat ul-Ulema-e Hind. Therein I commented that the then Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdullah was a sincere Kashmiri. Because of his bravery and sacrifices, he truly deserved to be called *Sher-e Kashmir*, the 'Lion of Kashmir'. But his moves for Kashmiri independence were simply unrealistic. I wrote that in 1947 he was in a position in which, had he been realistic, he could have decided the fate of Kashmir according to his wishes. But now, I said, when he had lost the power to decide things, he was going about setting up a hue and cry. This furore had no value in the world of today.

I described Sheikh Abdullah's predicament with the help of the following analogy. Once, a young man decided to open a shop. He had just stepped into the real world and had no idea as to the precautions one should take to survive in the world. And so, he used only a very ordinary lock for his shop.

One day, the young man returned from his shop looking very downcast. Seeing him, an elderly man asked, 'What's the matter? You seem very sad.'

'My shop has been robbed!' replied the young man.

'How did that happen?' asked the old man.

'The lock was just an ordinary one, and so the robber easily broke it and looted whatever was inside,' said the young man.

‘Then, it is your fault!’ quipped the old man.

‘Yes,’ replied the young man. ‘Now I’ve learnt that one should use a good, strong lock to keep one’s shop safe.’

‘Is this something to learn only after making a mistake? When you decided to become a shopkeeper, you should have known, from the very first day itself, that you should use a strong lock for your shop!’ the old man said.

In matters like one’s shop or other such personal affairs, I wrote, it is possible that if you make a mistake, you can correct yourself. But it is entirely different when it comes to national questions. In personal matters, after once suffering a loss it is possible to again turn the situation in your favour through hard work. But in national affairs, the moment you lose the handle that controls the power to make decisions, the problem becomes very complicated, and naturally very difficult to resolve.

I further remarked that leadership of a nation is only for those who can envision the future in the present. People whose vision is limited only to the present and the past, and who see the future only when it turns into a reality and bombards them, simply cannot lead a country—although, through their unwise actions, they can certainly entangle it in enormous problems.

I have continuously repeated this line in various other articles that I have been writing on the Kashmir issue over the last many years. If all that I have written on the subject were put together, it would form a voluminous book.

It is with God’s grace that thousands of Kashmiris have benefitted from these efforts I have made. Many of them have cleansed themselves of their militant mentality and are engaged in positive work. I keep receiving letters and telephone calls from Kashmiris in this regard.

Every political movement is attributed to a community or the general public, but, in actual fact, it is movement of and for its leaders. A few leaders incite people through their writings and speeches and then extract the price of their leadership in the name of the people. Such a situation greatly increases the leaders’

responsibilities. Under such conditions, a leader should have undergone the necessary preparation and be capable of handling the responsibilities that go with leadership. If someone becomes a leader without this necessary preparation, he commits a major crime in the eyes of God, even if he may be very popular among his people.

The Kashmiris are now faced with the final hour, as it were, when they must rise above their leaders and look at the whole question of Kashmir afresh. They must chart the course of their life, not in the light of the utterances of their leaders, but, rather, in the light of reality. There is simply no other way for them to succeed.

#### LESSONS FROM NATURE

When a stream is blocked by a boulder, it changes its course. Skirting the boulder, it carries on ahead. However, we foolish human beings act differently. We struggle in vain to seek to break the boulder and move ahead, even if this means that our journey comes to an end, once and for all.

The armed uprising in Kashmir against India began in October 1989. Just a month before this, I visited Kashmir, where I spoke at the Tagore Hall in Srinagar. This trip gave me the opportunity to meet numerous Kashmiris.

One day during this trip, I went with some Kashmiri Muslims to a valley outside Srinagar. The place was arrestingly beautiful. From the towering peaks streams tumbled into the valley below. My companions and I sat on the banks of a brook. I noticed the way the brook flowed, till it arrived at a massive rock. The brook did not bang its head against the rock, seeking to break it and move ahead. Rather, when it met the rock, it swerved around it and kept on with its forward journey uninterrupted.

I turned to my Kashmiri companions and said, 'This is a message from nature to you. This phenomenon of nature tells

you that if in the journey of life you face a hurdle, you should not seek to hurl yourself against it to carry on ahead. Rather, what you must do is to carefully avoid the hurdle and continue with your journey. This is the secret for success in life. It applies in the same way to communities as it does to individuals. The only way to progress is to ignore the hurdles one comes up against, and, instead, to focus on, and make use of, all available opportunities to build one's life.'

Personally, I do not regard the military or political presence of India in Kashmir as a hurdle for the Kashmiris. In the present democratic age, politics is simply a headache and an army is only a guard on the frontiers. Before 1989, the Indian Army in Kashmir was only stationed along the borders of Kashmir. Indian soldiers did not enter Kashmiri localities. But when in October 1989 Kashmiri activists picked up guns and took to the path of violence, the Indian Army entered Kashmiri settlements in order to combat the uprising, because the militants were based there.

Even if, for the sake of argument, the Kashmiri Muslims consider the presence of Indian soldiers in Kashmir to be an obstacle in their path, the only sensible way for them to succeed and progress is what nature tells them in its own language—'Ignore the problems and avail of the existing opportunities.'

This is not a principle that one should follow out of compulsion. Rather, it should be voluntarily adhered to. Nor does it apply only to the Kashmir case. In fact, it is a universal principle. It applies to all individuals and groups. It applies just as much to Muslim-majority countries as it does to countries where Muslims are a minority.

#### UNWISE METHODS

A basic principle for a successful life in this world is that if we have a dispute with someone over something, we must start by willingly accepting whatever concessions or advantages we are able to get.

If we do not do this at the very outset, and, instead, in a bid to get more, we delay the solution of the dispute, the situation is bound to become even more intractable. Consequently, it will become impossible for us to get even what we were initially getting in terms of what we wanted.

A good illustration of this principle is the ongoing problem of Palestine. In 1917, the British drew up a plan, commonly known as the Balfour Declaration, to partition Palestine. This partition scheme was clearly in favour of the Arabs. Under the scheme, less than a third of the territory of Palestine was given to Israel, and more than two-thirds was set aside for the Arabs. As per the scheme, the whole city of Jerusalem and the entire area of the Bayt ul-Maqdis was given to the Arabs. However, the Muslim leadership of that time refused to accept this scheme. A certain Arab scholar took a realistic stance on the matter and suggested that the scheme be accepted, for which he was accused of betraying Arab interests. This scholar died, uttering the following verse:

Soon my people will come to know that I have not  
betrayed them.

And no matter how long the night is, the morning is  
certain to come!

If the Muslim or Arab leaders had adopted a pragmatic and realistic approach, and, accepting whatever was being offered to them at the very outset, had concentrated all their efforts on work of construction and progress, the Palestinian Arab Muslims today might have been much better off than the Jews of the region. However, because of their unrealistic approach, the Palestinians' aspirations were brought to ruin.

Exactly the same thing happened in Jammu and Kashmir. Both the Kashmiri and the Pakistani leadership have been guilty of extreme ineptitude. Facts reveal that the present Kashmir problem is a result of the injudiciousness of the Kashmiri leaders



themselves, rather than of the oppression or conspiracies of others.

In this regard, the record of the injudiciousness of Muslim leaders is a long one. I will allude to just one aspect of this here. In 1947, when India was partitioned, Pakistani leaders adopted a completely unrealistic stance and staked their claim to two Hindu-majority Indian princely states: Junagadh and Hyderabad. Had the Pakistani leaders adopted a realistic approach and not claimed Junagadh and Hyderabad (which Pakistan was definitely not going to get in any case), the question of Kashmir would never have turned into a serious conflict. It could then have very easily been solved in favour of Pakistan. But the two-pronged thrust of the Pakistani leadership, in trying to seize Hyderabad and Junagadh and also Kashmir, resulted in Pakistan getting not even one of them!

Let me cite some facts to confirm this point. Chaudhry Muhammad Ali was the Prime Minister of Pakistan for a short period in the mid-1950s. Prior to this, he had been a minister in the cabinet of Prime Minister Liaqat Ali Khan. In his voluminous book *Emergence of Pakistan*, he relates that shortly after the Partition, the Muslim ruler of the princely state of Junagadh declared his state's accession to Pakistan, even though Junagadh had a Hindu majority. India did not accept this accession and, by force, took over the state and incorporated it into India. After this, a meeting was held in Delhi, attended by Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel, from the Indian side, and Liaqat Ali Khan and Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, from the Pakistani side.

Chaudhry Muhammad Ali writes:

Sardar Patel, although a bitter enemy of Pakistan, was a greater realist than Nehru. In one of the discussions between the two Prime Ministers, at which Patel and I were also present, Liaqat Ali Khan dwelt on the inconsistency of the Indian stand with regard to Junagadh and Kashmir. If Junagadh, despite its Muslim

ruler's accession to Pakistan, belonged to India because of its Hindu majority, how could Kashmir, with its Muslim majority, be a part of India simply by virtue of its Hindu ruler having signed a conditional instrument of accession to India? If the instrument of accession signed by the Muslim ruler of Junagadh was of no validity, the instrument of accession signed by the Hindu ruler of Kashmir was also invalid. If the will of the people was to prevail in Junagadh, it must prevail in Kashmir as well. India could not claim both Junagadh and Kashmir.

When Liaquat made these incontrovertible points, Patel could not contain himself and burst out: "Why do you compare Junagadh with Kashmir? Talk of Hyderabad and Kashmir, and we could reach an agreement." Patel's view at this time, and even later, was that India's efforts to retain Muslim-majority areas against the will of the people were a source not of strength but of weakness to India. He felt that if India and Pakistan agreed to let Kashmir go to Pakistan and Hyderabad to India, the problems of Kashmir and of Hyderabad could be solved peacefully and to the mutual advantage of India and Pakistan.

If what Chaudhry Muhammad Ali says is true, it is incontrovertible proof that the conflict over Kashmir is the creation of the Pakistani leaders themselves, and not of the Indian leaders.

Further proof of this is available in another book by the well-known Pakistani leader, Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan. This book was originally written in English, under the title *The Nation That Lost Its Soul*. Its Urdu edition, titled *Gumgashta-e-Qaum*, was published from Lahore. Here are some excerpts from this book:

Later, during the attack on Kashmir, Mountbatten came to Lahore. At a dinner attended by [the then Pakistani Prime Minister] Liaquat [Ali Khan], Governor Mudie

and four Ministers of West Punjab, Lord Mountbatten conveyed a message from Patel, the strongman of India, asking Liaquat to abide by the rules regarding the future of the princely States previously agreed upon between the Congress and the Muslim League: that they would accede to either India or Pakistan on the basis of the majority of their inhabitants and their contiguity to [either India or Pakistan]. Patel had said that Pakistan could take Kashmir and let go Hyderabad Deccan, which had a majority Hindu population and was nowhere near Pakistan, by sea or land. After delivering this message, Lord Mountbatten went to rest in the Lahore Government House.

I, being overall in charge of the Kashmir operations, went to Liaquat Ali Khan. I suggested to him that as the Indian Army had entered Kashmir and we would be unable to annex Kashmir with the help of the tribesmen, or even with our inadequate armed forces, we should make haste to accept Patel's proposal. Nawabzada [Liaquat Ali Khan] turned round to me and said, 'Sardar Sahib! Have I gone mad to give up Hyderabad State, which is much larger than the Punjab, for the sake of the rocks of Kashmir?'

I was stunned by the Prime Minister's reaction and his ignorance of our geography and his lack of wisdom. I thought he was living in a fool's paradise and did not understand the importance of Kashmir to Pakistan, while hoping to get Hyderabad, which at best was only quixotic, wishful thinking. It was not connected with Pakistan anywhere. In protest, I resigned from the position I was holding in the Kashmir operations.

If one accepts what Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan said as true, it is clear evidence that the conflict over Kashmir was created entirely and solely by the Muslim leadership and no one else.

Here, I will add that according to an established law of nature, it is not possible for any individual or community to exact the price of its own mistakes from others. A person has to pay the price of his follies himself, and definitely Pakistan is no exception to this rule.

#### BE REALISTIC

In April 1986, a group of Sikhs got together in Amritsar and declared what they called the independent State of Khalistan. At this time, I wrote an article in the *Hindustan Times*, captioned *Acceptance of Reality*. This article was about both Punjab and Kashmir. Addressing the people of Punjab and Kashmir, I wrote that the ongoing movements for an independent Punjab and an independent Kashmir could never succeed. They were tantamount to breaking one's head against a boulder. Nothing could be gained from such movements, except, of course, for some broken heads and worse. I advised the people of both regions to be realistic, to accept the status quo and to focus their energies on positive purposes instead.

The Sikhs realized this soon enough, and ended the violent militant movement for Khalistan. The Kashmiris, too, will certainly come round to this path finally, but only after much suffering and devastation, I fear. The reason for this difference is that the Kashmiris have given their suicidal policy the alluring name of 'Islamic martyrdom'.

In this regard, I would like to share a personal experience. In early 1992, two well-educated Kashmiri Muslims came to Delhi and met me. They were not members of any militant group, but yet they were staunch supporters of the Kashmiri militant movement. Not being militants in the practical sense of the term themselves, at the intellectual level they certainly were what could be called consummate 'ideological militants'.

In the course of our conversation, I told these men that

their self-styled ‘Kashmir movement’ was not at all proper or acceptable on any count. Nor was there any meaning in Kashmiri independence. It would spell nothing but disaster. But the men passionately supported the ‘movement’, claiming that very soon it would gain a ‘glorious success’. Then, they wrote in my diary the following words:

The Kashmir that will emerge after separation from India will, God willing, be an Islamic Kashmir.

After this, I said to the men, ‘What you claim is nothing but baseless wishful thinking. You people will very soon come to know how unrealistic your views are.’ Then, in front of them I wrote the following words in my diary:

Suppose Kashmir separates from India, the independent Kashmir or Pakistani Kashmir that will emerge will be a devastated Kashmir. The choice for the Kashmiris is not between Indian Kashmir and Pakistani Kashmir, but, rather, between Indian Kashmir and a devastated Kashmir.

Many years have passed since this incident took place. The developments over these many years fully prove that what the two so-called Kashmiri *mujahids* claimed was nothing but false and baseless wishful thinking. On the other hand, whatever I, with God’s grace, had said on that occasion has become an undeniable reality. Events over the years have proven that in today’s circumstances, Kashmir’s welfare lies not in the creation of an independent Kashmir or in becoming part of Pakistan. On all counts, Kashmir’s welfare lies in being part of India and for the Kashmiris to abandon their confrontational approach and adopt the path of peaceful construction and progress.

Those in Kashmir who are engaged in what they think to be a jihad movement call themselves ‘lovers of Islam’ (or what is called in Urdu *islam pasand*). My advice to these people is to become realistic (or *haqiqat pasand*) before becoming *islam pasand*. The

fort of Islam stands on firm ground. No fort can be built on the foundations of wishful thinking.

#### AVOID POLITICAL CONFRONTATION

‘A wise man is one who knows the relative value of things.’

Judging by this saying, it appears that among the Kashmiri leaders there is perhaps no one at all who could be called wise. They may know something about their people, but not a whit about the dire consequences of their actions.

They would do well to take a lesson from the decision made by the Queen of Sheba when the Prophet Solomon wrote to her asking her to submit to him. Despite her courtiers’ advice to her that she need not do Solomon’s bidding, the Queen replied:

‘Surely, when mighty kings invade a country, they despoil it and humiliate its noblest inhabitants—these men will do the same [...]’ (27:34)

A very important fact is brought out by the Quran. And that is that in confronting a powerful ruler one must think carefully of the consequences of doing so. If the consequences will prove negative, confrontation must be avoided. Experience proves that confronting a powerful ruler is generally counter-productive, for it leads to destruction on a massive scale. This devastating consequence of political confrontation is inevitable, no matter who the ruler one confronts.

Confronting a powerful ruler and fighting against him must be avoided at all costs and under all circumstances. If some people ignore this and directly confront such a ruler, it is pointless for them to later complain about loss of life and property. They ought to know that the destruction that they suffer is the price they pay for their having chosen a wrong course of action. Those

who take to the path of armed confrontation against an existing government have necessarily to suffer for it. It is simply impossible in this world for a certain group to make a mistake and then have the price paid for it by some other group.

Kashmiri and Pakistani ideologues have brought out numerous writings with such titles as *The Wounded Kashmir*, *The Wounded Valley* and so on. These writings which talk about how the Kashmiris are being oppressed by the Indian Army, are quickly disseminated across the world. Yet, in practical terms, they have no positive result or benefit at all. All these kinds of reports are simply pointless screaming and complaining.

The responsibility for the fact that all this demanding and demonstrating of theirs has proved absolutely ineffective must be shouldered entirely by the Kashmiris themselves. They have no one to blame but themselves. There is a great lesson for these Kashmiris in the story of the Queen of Sheba in the Quran, as mentioned above. The policy adopted by the Queen was a wise one in that it avoided the possibility of destruction and oppression by the army. But in contrast, because of their unwise approach, the Kashmiris simply invited the Indian Army to make them a target. What the Queen of Sheba did was just the opposite—she avoided confrontation. This, in one sentence, is the summary of the entire Kashmir story.

The way to find a solution to the vexed Kashmir problem is for the Kashmiris themselves to recognise their mistakes, and, learning a lesson from the example of the Queen of Sheba as described in the Quran, to prepare an appropriate plan of action to reconstruct their lives. There is simply no alternative solution.

#### WHAT WISDOM DEMANDS

According to a *hadith* report contained in the *Sunan Abu Dawud*, the Prophet advised Muslims not to adopt the path of violence, or else, he said, their conditions would become even more severe.

The veracity of this statement is clearly evident today in every Muslim country where people have adopted violence to attain their objectives. This is what has happened in Kashmir, too.

The culture of violence that has gripped Kashmir has had no beneficial consequence at all. On the contrary, the destruction that it has caused has been so enormous as to be simply indescribable. It has devastated Kashmir's economy and educational system. It has led to the death of over a hundred thousand people, with many more being injured and crippled for life. It has played havoc with moral values. The *Kashmiriyat* in whose name this militant movement was launched was itself destroyed. This culture of violence forced huge numbers of capable and highly educated Kashmiris to leave Kashmir and shift elsewhere. Kashmir's tourist industry, which played a major role in the state's economy, was decimated. In short, this movement, launched in the name of the Kashmiri people, produced no benefit whatsoever for the common Kashmiris, although it has certainly benefitted the self-styled leaders of Kashmir.

The Quran clearly tells us:

You may not grieve for what has escaped you (57:23)

This Quranic verse tells us of a law of nature that God has established in this world. According to this law, every person and every community has to experience some form of loss, at some time or the other. No person or community is exempted from this law of nature, for this is part of God's creation plan. In other words, this is God's law, and so it is impossible for anyone to change it.

But, along with this, there is another law of nature—that in this world opportunities never cease. Here, whenever one opportunity is lost, at once another one emerges. Hence, wisdom demands that we should forget our lost opportunities and, instead, should make use of the new ones that are available to us. This is precisely what the Kashmiris should do today.

Exploitative leaders thrive on fanning people's feelings of



being denied or deprived. On the other hand, true leaders lead movements that are based on achievements rather than denial or deprivation. They point out to people the available opportunities, not closed doors, and in this way help chart a new future for their people.

#### PEACE AND JUSTICE

You can live in a state of perpetual peace, but definitely not in a state of perpetual war. But perhaps the leaders of Kashmir have no knowledge of this well-tested fact of history. They have kept up with their completely pointless war, which has now assumed the form of suicide bombing. Little do they know that the Japanese resorted to suicide bombing on an even more massive scale in the Second World War but that this tactic completely failed. Not a single ruler in history, no matter how powerful, has been able to maintain a state of perpetual war. How, then, can the weak people of Kashmir hope to keep up their pointless war forever? What is bound to finally happen is that the Kashmiri militants will one day tire of fighting and will be compelled to call off their war. But the right way would be for the Kashmiris to adopt a wise policy and end this devastating war on the basis of their own decision.

Once, in a conversation with an educated Kashmiri Muslim, I said that what Kashmir needs most today is peace. He replied that the Kashmiris, too, want peace, but, he added, it should be peace with justice. Peace that did not go along with justice, he argued, was beneficial only for oppressors but not for the oppressed.

My answer was that this was the gravest misunderstanding—a misunderstanding shared by all the Muslim leaders throughout the world. Peace, I said, is defined as the absence of war. This is a correct definition. Peace can never be established along with justice. Instead, when peace is established, it creates opportunities,

which can be availed to achieve justice. This, I mentioned, was in accordance both with reason and Islam.

When the Prophet Muhammad entered into a peace treaty with the pagan Quraysh at Hudaibiya, he secured from this only peace, not justice. However, this peace created opportunities. The Prophet availed of these opportunities and finally justice was achieved. Justice is never a part of peace. The two cannot be had simultaneously. Rather, justice is always secured only after peace is established, by using the available opportunities. Justice does not automatically stem from peace.

The leaders of the Kashmiri militant movement constantly and unanimously repeat one point. And that is that they want the Kashmir issue to be resolved in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations, or, in other words, that a referendum be held in Kashmir. The meaninglessness of this argument, from the legal and logical points of view, was made clear to the whole world when the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, announced in Islamabad that the United Nations' resolutions had now become irrelevant.

Here I would like to point out a matter of principle. And that is that one can secure one's rights only on the basis of one's own strength, and not through someone else's. It is simply unrealistic and wishful thinking to expect the United Nations' resolutions to be acted upon in today's context.

#### THIS IS NOT AN ISLAMIC MOVEMENT

Kashmir's Muslim militants call their war an 'Islamic jihad'. This is completely erroneous. The un-understandable silence of the Muslim *ulema* on this point has only further convinced these Kashmiri militants of their claim. The fact is that the present war in Kashmir is most definitely not a jihad. Those who are part of this war definitely cannot receive the reward for participating in jihad.

Just as there are certain conditions to be observed in Islam for offering prayer, so also are there certain conditions for jihad in the path of God. The war in Kashmir does not fulfill these conditions. A jihad requires a regular *amir*, or leader. It also requires a Muslim territory that can serve as its headquarters. Also, necessary prior preparations must be made for jihad. Jihad, moreover, is not fought for land, power, or wealth, but for establishing God's Word. And so on.

The fact is that the Kashmiris' war does not fulfill a single one of these conditions. The present war in Kashmir can be called either a guerilla war or a proxy war, but neither of these has any relation whatsoever with Islam. Guerilla war is un-Islamic because in Islam, leading jihad is the task of the ruler, not of members of the general public. Proxy war is un-Islamic because a government that engages in such a war does not openly announce it, while an open announcement of war is a necessary condition for an Islamic war.

If this reality is kept in mind, the ongoing futile war in Kashmir conveys this message to the Kashmiris:

You must, without a single moment's delay, end your war because this war will cause your destruction, both in this world and in the Hereafter. You are bound to face devastation in this world because you are fighting without the necessary preparations. And your devastation in the Hereafter will be because, in the name of jihad, you are fighting a war that, according to Islamic principles, is simply not a jihad.

A movement for political independence is not an Islamic movement. Rather, it is wholly a communal or nationalist movement. There appears to be no harm if such a movement is launched in the name of nationalism, but if such a movement is carried on in the name of Islamic jihad, it will certainly be a wrongful movement.

Not a single prophet launched any movement in the name of

his country's freedom or political freedom, even though most of the prophets lived at a time when conditions were exactly the same as those that prevail when political leaders launch movements for freedom of their homelands. For instance, at the time of the Prophet Joseph, a pagan foreign family ruled over Egypt. Yet, Joseph did not launch a political movement of this sort in the country. Such a movement was launched later, after Joseph's demise, and it was led not by his companions but, rather, by what could be called 'community leaders'..

If the Kashmiri Muslims want to make their movement an Islamic one, it is incumbent on them that, first of all, they must completely end the present form of their struggle. They must admit that they have been carrying on what is an entirely national or communal movement to which they have wrongly given an Islamic label. Accordingly, they must completely distance themselves from this. No such movement can ever earn God's help.

Kashmiri Muslims often lament that they are being crushed on two sides—by the Indian Army, on the one hand, and by militants, on the other. They also claim that when their so-called jihad was started, a number of good people were involved in it but that it has now gone into the hands of the wrong people.

This claim is totally wrong. The fact is that this is the inevitable consequence of guerilla war, always and everywhere. Guerilla wars are started by what seem to be good people, but later on, wrong or bad people inevitably join in, because they find in these movements a convenient shelter—in the name of, say, 'Islamic jihad' or 'national liberation'—under which they can engage in killing and looting and falsely claim this behaviour to be 'legitimate'.

Hence, this sort of pretext is not going to be of any benefit whatsoever for the Kashmiris. They have to admit that launching their guerilla war was a mistake from the very first day itself. In a situation like this, admitting one's mistakes, rather than blaming others, is the very first step that one must take.

THE POLITICS OF THE POSSIBLE

In life, one is sometimes given a second chance, but one must know how to make use of it. For instance, the first chance, as it were, that India got after it won its independence was to emerge on the world map as a united country. But this was not to be its fate, and so the leaders of the country availed of the other opportunities that they had before them. Pakistan faced a similar situation, too. The Pakistani leaders dreamt that East and West Pakistan would jointly form a large country, but in 1971-72, when Bangladesh was created, they lost this first chance. Thereafter, the Pakistani leaders tried to use the other available opportunities to build their country.

The same holds true, in different ways, in the case of every other country. Each country has, in some way or the other, lost its first chance. But, availing of the second chance—other available opportunities—they have been able to gain a new lease of life.

This holds true for Kashmir, too. The leaders of Kashmir had a political dream for their land prior to 1947—this was, in a sense, their first chance. But they lost this chance with the Partition in 1947. And so, now the proper and possible way out for the Kashmiris is to use their second chance—the existing opportunities—to build a new Kashmir.

Some of the leaders of Kashmir dreamt of an independent country. This did not seem impossible to them. But the decisive developments in the conditions after 1947 rendered the emergence of an independent Kashmir on the map of the Indian subcontinent impossible. Now, what is possible, given the existing conditions, is that Kashmir should be part of India under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Till now, Kashmiri leaders have been engaged in the politics of the impossible. Now, recognizing practical realities, they must engage in the politics of the possible.

The only proper advice for the Kashmiris is that they must forget the past and learn to live in the present. They must seek

to build their lives in view of the opportunities present, not according to past notions.

If with regard to Kashmir Pakistan were to adopt a policy of admitting existing realities, it would be nothing new for it. After all, prior to this, Pakistan had to adopt this very policy with regard to Bangladesh (the former East Pakistan). And so, it has no excuse as to why it cannot do the same with regard to Kashmir.

#### GLOBAL POSSIBILITIES

The Kashmiri Muslims have certain plus points, which they have not really seriously thought about so far. One of these is that if they join India, they can gain the status of being part of a country that has among the world's largest Muslim populations, even larger than Pakistan and Bangladesh. This is such a plus point for the Kashmiri Muslims that if they were aware of it, they could gain the greatest blessing of life: that is, confidence and courage and the complete absence of feelings of inferiority.

Because of the wrong guidance of their incompetent leaders, the Kashmiri Muslims have lost their first opportunity, but their second opportunity is still available to them even now. Using this second opportunity, they can attain all that they want.

It is the good fortune of the Kashmiris that when, after seeming to have lost their first chance or opportunity, they were entering a new phase defined by their second chance, there was such a dramatic transformation in global conditions that the entire world was turned into a global village. Because of this, the question of changing political systems became an issue of relatively little importance. The new global conditions have made it possible for anyone living anywhere on the face of the earth to establish global communications. Even if some people do not seem to form part of the political class or to have political power, they can still obtain all the benefits that in earlier times could

only have been enjoyed by those who were part of the governing apparatus.

Singapore and Japan illustrate this point very clearly. They are, in terms of size, small countries, and yet they are enjoying the benefits of global possibilities and potentialities. The Kashmiris, too, can avail of these in the same way, but only if they make wise use of them.

#### VICTORY FOR BOTH

It sometimes happens that two individuals or groups quarrel over a piece of land. A part of the land is grabbed by one group, and the rest by the other. It may happen that both groups fight each other to grab each other's bit of land, and in the process both groups are devastated. But another way is for the parties to agree that each can keep the bit of land that he has, end their quarrel and get busy developing their bits of land. This way to solve a dispute is what is called a 'win-win solution'.

This, to my mind, is the best and most practicable formula to solve the conflict between India and Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir. At present, both India and Pakistan control parts of Jammu and Kashmir. If, on the basis of the 'win-win solution' principle, the two agree to be satisfied with whatever part of the state they presently control, and, abandoning the path of conflict, they focus on developing their respective parts of the state, it would definitely be greatly beneficial for both countries. Both countries could embark on the path of progress that has been blocked for a very long time.

It is true that the portion of Kashmir under Pakistani control is relatively small in size. But experience tells us that in this world the size of a territory is only of relative importance. What is really important is the wise use of a territory's resources. Numerous countries, such as Taiwan and Singapore, for instance, are very

small in size but, in terms of progress and prosperity, are in much better shape than many big countries.

Man is a 'psychological creature'. It is a person's psyche that creates his personality. Experience shows that if someone develops a negative psyche, his entire personality becomes negative. On the other hand, if someone develops a positive psyche, his entire personality becomes positive.

This rule applies as much to individuals as it does to groups, communities and countries. The problem of Jammu and Kashmir has been a continuing source of bitterness between India and Pakistan from 1947 onwards. In this long period, both countries have viewed each other as enemies. Each of them feels that the other has robbed it of its rights. 'I may have been defeated, but so have you!' they think in relation to each other. Consequently, both countries are driven by the very strongly negative emotions they feel for each other. Their relations are such that they simply cannot properly focus on constructive work for their own progress.

Now, if both countries were to behave wisely, new doors of progress would open up for them. For this, however, they would have to replace their negative approach with a positive one. 'I may have been defeated, but so have you!' would have to be replaced by 'I won, and so have you!'

Till now, these two neighbouring countries have viewed each other as deadly enemies. But if a fundamental change in psyche occurs, they will begin to see each other as friends. Till now, both countries have lived with a sense of having been deprived of their due. But if they change to a positive way of thinking, they can focus on their achievements instead. Till now, both countries have thought of themselves as surrounded by problems. But through positive thinking they can see that they are surrounded by numerous opportunities. Despite their geographical and political separation, a constructive unity can be established between them. And all this would be a miraculous result of both countries having adopted the 'win-win solution' path.



## MOVING TOWARDS A SOLUTION

The choice that Pakistan faces today is not between democracy and military rule. Rather, it is between either remaining in the impasse in which it finds itself, thereby wiping itself off the roadmap of the global community, or extricating itself from this impasse and moving ahead.

In the history of a country, it can sometimes happen that its progress comes to a complete standstill. At such times, it becomes imperative for it to take a bold decision so that its progress may resume. This sort of decision is often unpopular and against people's sentiments. Such bold decisions are often taken by military rulers. Generally, democratically elected rulers do not take such bold decisions because they come to power after being elected by the people. They hesitate to take any revolutionary decision that is not in accordance with popular sentiments.

To make this point, let me cite two instances. One of these is from Muslim history—the instance of Salahuddin Ayyubi (d. 1193 C.E.). What is considered to have been his great achievement was his protecting the Muslim world from the Crusaders. But how did Salahuddin gain the powerful status that enabled him to play this great role? He was a military officer under the Sultan of Egypt, Nuruddin Zangi. When the Sultan died, Salahuddin snatched his throne, although the Sultan had sons of his own. In this way, Salahuddin became the Sultan. Muslim historians generally regard this seizing of the throne by Salahuddin as legitimate because, although from the legal point of view it seemed to be wrong, from the point of view of its results, it proved to be of enormous political benefit. It was this that made it possible for Salahuddin to later play his great role in protecting Islam and Muslims.

Another instance is that of the French President Charles de Gaulle (d. 1970). He was a General in the French Army, but later seized political power and became the country's President. On the face of it, this was an anti-democratic action, but by doing so

de Gaulle was able to take a major step in saving France that a democratically elected ruler could not take.

At that time, France still had many colonies in Africa, which it called 'French provinces'. But this unrealistic policy proved to be so dangerous for France that in the race for 'progress' after the Second World War, it became the 'Sick Man' of Europe. De Gaulle examined the matter, setting aside French national sentiment. He realized that the only solution to the problem was to unilaterally grant freedom to the French colonies in Africa. This move was completely opposed to the sentiments of the French people. But it was this unpopular decision that granted France the status of a major power in the race for 'progress'.

The current situation in Pakistan is somewhat similar. Pakistan's undeclared war against India over Kashmir has brought immense destruction to Pakistan itself. The entire world views Pakistan as a very unsafe country. Global financial institutions are not ready to invest there. The unrest among the Pakistani public has led to strife in vast parts of the country. Pakistan's religious, educational and cultural institutions have become centres for destructive activities.

The most horrific result of these developments is the alarming brain-drain that the country is facing. Human beings naturally want to progress and move ahead. And for the progress of any country it is enough if its people have the opportunities to carry on with their efforts. For instance, peace should prevail; there should be good infrastructure; people should be properly compensated for their work. If in any country these opportunities are fully available, every person in that country will himself or herself become actively engaged and the country will automatically begin to progress. However, unfortunately, this could not happen in Pakistan. There, because of the ideology based on agitating against, and seeking to forcibly overthrow, the political status quo, an emergency situation was created that continued uninterrupted. As a result, people had very limited opportunities to progress. That is why large numbers of capable

Pakistanis left Pakistan and shifted elsewhere. During my visits to America, I have asked many Pakistanis who had settled in America why they left their country and came to America. Almost all of them replied that in America they had opportunities to work, unlike in Pakistan.

The unrealistic policies of Pakistan with regard to Kashmir have proven to be an obstacle blocking the path to Pakistan's further development. It is a fact that Pakistan has been left far behind in the field of progress. The only way for it to overcome this backwardness is to stop fighting against problems, and, instead, to adopt a policy of making use of available opportunities. In the present circumstances, what the Pakistani leaders must do is agree to accept the status quo in Kashmir. In other words, the Line of Control in Kashmir should be accepted as the agreed frontier between India and Pakistan, with certain necessary adjustments. In this regard, by accepting the geographical and political status quo that has come to prevail between India and Pakistan in Kashmir, the Kashmir conflict can be resolved forever. I have been consistently and continuously advocating this solution since 1968.

Pakistan must abandon its emotional-driven policy with regard to Kashmir and in its place adopt a realistic policy. It must come to an agreement with India on Kashmir so that peace may be established in Pakistan and the country can focus on its internal development.

Ever since 1947, Pakistan's politics have centered on one question—and that is, to change the political status quo in Kashmir. But it has been conclusively and fully proven that this is an enormously destructive policy, which will not produce any positive results. It did not have any positive consequences in the past. This is how it is at present as well. And, it will be the same in the future, too.

For Pakistan to take a revolutionary step of the sort I have suggested would certainly not be easy. But if, mustering courage, it does take this decision, it would gain miraculous results. Its

undeclared war with India would come to an end and peace would be established. The negative mentality of the Pakistani people would transform into a positive mentality. Mutually beneficial trade would flourish between India and Pakistan. There would be exchanges between the two countries at various levels, including in the fields of education, culture and politics. Exchange of literature would help remove misunderstandings between them, and a brotherly atmosphere would be promoted. India and Pakistan share much in terms of culture. Yet, despite this, although neighbours, the two remain distant. But if the Kashmir issue were to be solved as I have suggested, they would become friendly neighbours.

Whenever an individual, community or nation wants to do something, it is faced with a pre-existing status quo. Now, there are two ways of thinking in this regard. One is to first try to change the existing status quo so that the road is cleared and one is able to do as one wants. The other is to leave aside the existing status quo as it is and to focus one's efforts on other possible activities instead.

This latter approach I call 'positive status quoism'. And this approach is in accordance with reason. That is to say, when what one considers to be an ideal solution is unattainable, one should agree to accept what is practical. This is what Islam, too, teaches. That is, the best and most useful policy with regard to a conflict is reconciliation and coming to an agreement with the other party. In other words, when faced with a conflict, one should desist from confrontation and, instead, adopt a conciliatory approach.

This suggestion of accepting the status quo in Kashmir and basing relations between India and Pakistan on firm foundations is not a new one. When Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime Minister of India, India and Pakistan had evidently agreed to this proposal, so much so that Sheikh Abdullah went to Pakistan as a mediator. But with Nehru's sudden death, no action could be taken on this historic proposal. According to an article in *The Hindustan Times* (18th June, 2001):

By 1956, Nehru had publicly offered a settlement of Kashmir with Pakistan over the ceasefire line (now converted into the Line of Control). On 23 May 1964, Nehru asked Sheikh Abdullah to meet Ayub Khan in Rawalpindi in an effort to solve the Kashmir imbroglio [...] the Pakistani leader agreed to a summit with Nehru, which was to be held in June 1964. This message was urgently telegraphed to Nehru on May 26. But just as Nehru's consent reached Karachi, the world also learnt that Nehru had died in his sleep. And with that a major opportunity for a peaceful solution [of the] Kashmir [conflict] was also lost.

If Pakistan were to accept the status quo in Kashmir as a permanent solution, it would not have any negative consequences at all for Pakistan, nor, in broader terms, for Muslims as a whole. In such a situation, despite being separate from Pakistan, Kashmir would still retain its status of a Muslim-majority region. Furthermore, it is an uncontested fact that the Muslims who live in India are in a better position than the Muslims of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Another point to be noted is that for Pakistan to reconcile with India is no ordinary matter. If it does so, it would be able to end its on-going conflict with its powerful neighbour. To end a running conflict with a neighbour is tantamount to opening the doors to every kind of progress. How ending a conflict with an enemy paves the way for progress is illustrated by the example of modern Japan. During the Second World War, Japan and the USA were enemies, but after the war, Japan reconciled with America. This reconciliation enabled Japan to emerge as an economic super-power.

Pakistan's present policy has become the cause of Islam being given a bad name. In line with this policy, Pakistan had sought to make hatred against India a means of promoting national unity. But this wrong policy did not succeed in uniting the people of

Pakistan (including the former East Pakistan) in the name of Islam. It only united them in the name of anti-India hatred. And this, as a result, gave the world the chance to say that Islam did not have the power to unite Muslims. As an article in the Delhi-based *The Hindustan Times* (18th June, 2001) put it, 'Islam does not hold Pakistan together any more, but anti-Indianism does.'

If Pakistan were to adopt a reconciliatory approach, it would help promote a positive mindset among its people. This would help usher in a new period in that country, wherein Pakistani national unity would be based not on anti-Indian, but on pro-Islam, sentiments. This would be so immensely beneficial that it would not be surprising if all the doors of Divine blessings were opened to it.

Letter addressed to the then Pakistani President, General Pervez Musharraf prior to his visit to India

New Delhi  
9th July, 2001

Respected President Pervez Musharraf,  
*Assalamu Alaikum!*

Your impending visit to India (15-16 July, 2001) is a source of joy for all of us. May God bless this step with full success!

On 12 October 1999, when God saved you from a possible air crash and blessed you with the political leadership of Pakistan, I remembered an incident in the life of Robert Clive. When Clive escaped an accident, he exclaimed, 'God! You have saved me so that I can do something big!' After this, he really went on to do something big in British history. I feel this will be repeated with you, too. I feel that God has saved you with His special assistance so that you can play a vital role in establishing peace on the Indian subcontinent, which history has been awaiting for the last half century.

When I heard the news that you were planning to visit India at the invitation of the Government of India, I wrote several

articles about your impending trip, which were published in Urdu, Hindi and English newspapers in India [...]

If you permit me, I would like to say that with regard to Kashmir, Pakistan should adopt a policy that is expressed in the English saying, 'Politics is the art of the possible.'

I have, as a well-wisher, been pondering on the Kashmir problem ever since its inception. I started writing on this subject in 1968, for the Urdu, Hindi and English press. Based on an impartial analysis of the problem, my firm opinion is that with regard to Kashmir, Pakistan has only two possible options. The first is that in this matter Pakistan should adopt a de-linking policy. That is to say, it should set aside the Kashmir issue to be resolved through dialogue and establish normal relations with India in all other spheres. And the second is that it should accept the geographical status quo in Jammu and Kashmir as the accepted international border and thereby end this problem, once and for all. Besides these, no practical solution is possible. The only alternative is enormous devastation.

There is another very important aspect of this issue. You know that in present times, militancy has emerged in different parts of the world in the name of jihad. And prominent among these places is Kashmir. This militancy has produced no benefit at all. On the contrary, it has caused devastating damage, in that it has caused Islam to earn the image of being a violent religion. This bad name that has been given to it has stopped the progress of Islam that had been carrying on continuously for the last 1000 years.

If you enter into a peace treaty with India, it will not benefit just Pakistan alone. Rather, because of it, a new, healthy process will be set in motion in the entire Muslim world. After this, the present violent tendencies will give way to a *dawah*-oriented outlook.

Present-day commentators see Pakistan as a possible 'nuclear flashpoint'. But if you act with courage and enter into a

Hudaybiya-like peace treaty, Pakistan will become a ‘dawah flashpoint’ instead.

I suppose adopting a policy of reconciliation with regard to Kashmir would be a risk as far as your popularity is concerned. But the answer to this apprehension is provided in the Quran (4:128), which tells us that ‘reconciliation is best’. This means that if in contentious matters one avoids confrontation, and, instead, agrees to reconciliation, it is much better from the point of view of results.

In life, every big success entails risks. You are aware that France’s colonial policies in Africa greatly weakened it. But General de Gaulle boldly, and in a unilateral way, ended this policy. The result of this was that the General’s popularity in France nosedived, but today this ‘de Guallism’ is regarded as a successful foreign policy because, due to it, France gained new strength after the Second World War.

May God help you in every way!

Wahiduddin

#### THEY SAT TOGETHER, TALKED, AND THEN DEPARTED

On 14th July 2001, the then Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf arrived in Delhi. The then Indian Prime Minister wanted the geographical and political status quo in Jammu and Kashmir to be maintained while normal relations were established between India and Pakistan in all other matters. This was essential for the progress of both countries. But the Pakistani President’s demand was that, first of all, the status quo in Jammu and Kashmir should be changed, and, according to his claim, Pakistan’s right over the entire state should be accepted. Only after that would he agree to normal relations between the two countries. Given these two different perspectives on the issue, the talks that were held between the leaders of the two countries on the occasion failed.



When General Pervez Musharraf arrived in India, he spoke, to begin with, in such a manner that it appeared that he had come to India with the intention of reconciliation. For instance, in a speech at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi, he said that no military solution of the Kashmir conflict was possible. Similarly, at a press conference in Agra, he spoke about 'acceptance of reality'. He also said that he had come to India with an open mind. Yet, later, without entering into any realistic reconciliation, he returned to Pakistan.

As far as I can gauge, General Musharraf apprehended fierce emotional reaction on the part of the Pakistani public, and that is why he could not enter into any reconciliation with India and returned home. According to one commentator, 'General Pervez Musharraf knew that the emotionally-charged people of Pakistan, who cannot tolerate defeat by India even on the cricket pitch, would definitely not tolerate political defeat by India in Kashmir.'

The Pakistani President must have known that if he entered into a compromise with India on Kashmir, the Pakistani public would have considered it their political defeat and he would have become the target of their ire. But, on the other hand, not compromising and reconciling with India on Kashmir would have only further worsened Pakistan's woeful economic conditions, which would have led to the Pakistani public becoming even more disillusioned with General Musharraf.

In such a situation, the Pakistani President had to choose between two evils, one of which would ruin his political career. It was for him to decide which of the two was a lesser evil, and then choose it over the greater evil.

In my opinion, accepting the Indian position on Kashmir would have been opting for the 'lesser evil' from the point of view of Pakistan, because it would have been tantamount simply to Pakistan acknowledging something that it had already lost. In return for this, Pakistan would have been rewarded with the opening of doors of progress that have so far been closed

to it. And if, on the contrary, the Government of Pakistan did not accept the Indian position on Kashmir and continued its undeclared war with India, the devastating consequence would be that not only would Pakistan continue to be deprived of what it has lost, but that it would, in addition, see the worsening of its economic devastation – which is already intolerable.

#### AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING, OMINOUS RESULT

Self-styled ‘Islamic’ groups in Pakistan and fundamentalists in India seem to be distinct from each other in terms of their beliefs. But at the practical level, both are almost identical. Both claim that they alone are the saviour of their respective countries. But the fact is that perhaps no one has caused more harm than they to their own countries.

The reason for this is that although both groups claim to be well-wishers of their respective countries, both are also extremists. And not even a single home, leave alone an entire country, can properly run on the basis of extremism.

Take the case of Islamist groups in Pakistan. These people have been active in Pakistan ever since 1947. They appear to have succeeded in getting many of their demands met. Yet, these successes of theirs have not brought about positive results, in the wider sense of the term, for their country.

One can cite several examples from Pakistani political history to substantiate this point. Here I will restrict myself only to the problem of Kashmir. In line with their particular mindset, Pakistani Islamist groups have labeled the Kashmiri movement not as a Kashmiri nationalist one, but, rather, as a jihad.

In a nationalist movement, practical realities are always the decisive factor. Because of this, nationalist movements always have a certain flexibility and allow for the possibility of adjustment. But jihad is a matter of religious belief. When something is deemed to be connected with jihad, people who are linked to it

lose their flexibility and their willingness to accept adjustments. This is because with regard to jihad they believe that even if by following their present policy they obtain nothing, still their success lies in giving up their lives by doing whatever they are doing. In dying in the course of what they think is a jihad they believe that they will directly reach heaven.

Developments show that secularist quarters in Pakistan are ready to adopt a policy of adjustment with India on the Kashmir question. But the Islamist camp in Pakistan is vociferously opposed to this. They have made this issue so emotionally-laden that many Pakistanis have now come to believe that whether or not they are able to reach and conquer Srinagar, they will certainly reach heaven by fighting for this cause! In this way, the Pakistani Islamist groups have become a major obstacle in the way of Pakistan adopting a policy of adjustment on Kashmir, although history tells us that such a policy has always been the sole means of success for any people or nation.

Now take the case of India. Fundamentalists in India are playing the same sort of negative role as Pakistani Islamists. Religious fundamentalism promotes among its advocates an extreme sense of self-righteousness. A consequence of this mentality is that people who are infected by it develop tendencies towards extremism and fanaticism. Such people are concerned only about themselves and care nothing at all about others. They think of themselves as right in all matters, and of others as always and inevitably wrong. They think that they alone, and no one else, deserve consideration.

After Independence, the fundamentalist lobby in India became very active. As an example of the negative results of their stance, I would like to cite the outcome of General Pervez Musharraf's visit to India in July 2011 at the invitation of the Government of India.

The Pakistani President met Indian leaders in Delhi and Agra, and, to begin with, this programme of meetings seemed to give cause for hope. But later, a certain bitterness crept in, so that the

meeting between Indian and Pakistani leaders ended without a joint declaration being issued. The Pakistani President's visit had been a failure.

What caused this failure? According to me, one major reason was the inflexible attitude of certain Indian fundamentalist leaders. Because of their rigid mindset, they were unable to deal effectively with the Pakistani President, and that is one reason for the failure of the meeting.

For more than half a century now, I have been of the opinion that the only possible solution to the Kashmir problem is for both countries to accept the current Line of Actual Control in Jammu and Kashmir as the established border between India and Pakistan. Obviously, this is a very bitter pill for Pakistan to swallow. This is why, in order to make this proposal acceptable, one needs to act with great wisdom. Without this, it is impossible to succeed. You cannot win by abusing your opponent. But you can certainly win by showing appropriate consideration and love.

When General Pervez Musharraf came to India, he gave several hints from which one could estimate that he was ready for dialogue and reconciliation. He said he had come to India with an open mind. Visiting his ancestral home in Delhi, he indicated that he was an Indian by birth, and that this was why he naturally had a soft corner in his heart for India. In his speech at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, he commented that there could be no military solution to the Kashmir dispute. At a press conference in Agra, he spoke about the acceptance of reality and the need for a step-by-step approach. And so on.

These sorts of gestures from the Pakistani President suggested that he was ready for a reconciliatory approach. He wanted to end the Kashmir conflict. But our leaders, owing to their fundamentalist outlook, could not reap the benefit of his gestures. And so, a great potentially historic event failed to happen.

Our Indian fundamentalist leaders should have known that, irrespective of whatever agreement General Musharraf might concede to, he had to return to his country. Hence, they

should have been very careful and wise in their utterances, so that when General Musharraf returned to Islamabad, he would not be greeted with black flags. But because of the inflexible attitude of our leaders and their unrealistic utterances, all talk of reconciliation suddenly and dramatically evaporated. How something that started off on a very positive note ended up on a disappointing note was widely discussed in the media, and I do not need to deal with it here.

Resolving a conflict requires great wisdom as well as full consideration for the other party. When it comes to one's personal interests, everyone knows how important this is. But when it comes to the question of national interests, people quickly forget this, and behave as if this were an alien idea.

#### THE WORK TO BE DONE

The history of the last few hundred years in Kashmir can be divided into three major periods. In the first period, the people of Kashmir were influenced by Sufis. The arrival of Sufis in Kashmir benefitted the Kashmiris in that they received the gift of Islam through them. The vast majority of Kashmiris converted to Islam. But for many Kashmiris, Islam became synonymous with culture. Most Kashmiris were wedded to the graves and shrines (*dargahs*) of the Sufis. They took to reciting particular types of litanies with great care, as if this itself was Islam in its totality. A negative fall-out of this shrine-based understanding of Islam or 'cultural Islam' was that no true, deeper understanding of Islam developed that could have enabled the people to see things in a proper and far-sighted manner. This unawareness made the Kashmiris vulnerable to negative politics that bore no relation to authentic Islam. Neither did such politics provide the Kashmiris with any worldly benefit.

Islam provides Man with a spiritual centre. It teaches Man the appropriate method of worship. It provides Man with a Divine

culture. As far as I know, the people of Kashmir learned about these aspects of Islam, but there was another aspect of Islam whose benefit they remained cut off from to a great extent. And that was the building up of the intellect. The education and nurturing of the Kashmiris was not done in a manner that would enkindle in them the proper Islamic awareness. It is perhaps right to say that while the Kashmiris embraced Islam at the religious level, they did not succeed in going very far in terms of the transformation of their awareness on Islamic lines.

Stirred up by the slogans raised by some leaders in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Kashmiris began mobilising against the then Dogra Raj. If this is looked at from the Islamic point of view, it was an emotional outburst. And so, we see that, despite appearing to be successful, this movement played no role in the building of the Kashmiris' future. The movement against Dogra rule was more the expression of the boldness of some political leaders than the expression of Islamic awareness in the true sense of the term.

After 1947, a new period of movements emerged among the Kashmiris. In this period, the people of Kashmir were influenced by two major movements. One was in the name of secularism, and the other was in the name of Islam. Both these movements, once again, were the products of the political aims of some leaders. They were not born of Islamic awareness in the real sense of the term.

After 1947, secularist leaders carried on their movement in the name of Kashmiri independence as well as in the name of accession to Pakistan. Some leaders benefitted from these movements by becoming famous and gaining in material terms, but as far as the Kashmiri public was concerned, they were running towards a non-existent target. These movements were completely pointless and futile—they had a beginning, but they had no end.

Another section of Kashmiri leaders launched a movement for what they called 'Islamic Kashmir' and the establishment of

the what they called the 'Prophetic System' or *Nizam-e Mustafa*. These people took the name of Islam, but they really had no assets, as it were, other than mere wishful thinking and emotionalism. They were driven by romantic emotions, and drove others, too, all the while imagining that they were moving in the direction of Islam. But the fact is that, leave alone benefitting Islam, their movement did not benefit even the Kashmiris in worldly terms. This world is a world of practical realities. Here it is not possible to gain positive results from emotional politics.

It is because of the failure of these movements that after 1989, the Kashmiri movement took to the path of violence. The violent and destructive movement that emerged among the Kashmiris was a result of their frustration. To begin with, they followed their foolish leaders on a completely pointless course. And then, when in accordance with the law of nature these movements proved useless, they became frustrated and agitated and launched an armed struggle.

The proper way now for the Kashmiris is to reassess their entire history. Admitting their past mistakes, they should make new plans for their future. It is a fact that the Kashmiris have lost their 'first chance'. And so, now the only possible way out for them is to understand, in a very conscious way, what their 'second chance' is, and to willingly use it, and in the right way.

For the Kashmiris to embark on building their lives once again, they need to focus, in particular, on three things: education, economic development and *dawah*.

The Kashmiris should abstain completely from politics and the gun. They must focus particularly on education, setting up educational institutions across the state. For at least 25 years, they should relinquish all other projects and concentrate on the education of their children.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has great potential for trade and industry. Till now, the Kashmiri Muslims have taken very little advantage of this potential. They must now focus on trade and industry.

The third field which the Kashmiri Muslims should focus on is *dawah*. By *dawah* I mean communicating the message of Islam to others. In this regard, the Kashmiri Muslims have before them two very large fields of action—one being the non-Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir, and the other being the tourists who flock in large numbers to Kashmir.

If peace could be established in Kashmir, the tourism industry would greatly expand. From the *dawah* point of view, this would be of immense benefit, with people of different faiths coming in contact with the Kashmiri Muslims. If the Kashmiris avail of this opportunity in the right way, it would in itself suffice for their success in this world and in the Hereafter.

#### KASHMIR, REPLICA OF PARADISE

Once upon a time, Kashmir used to be called *jannat nazeer*, which means ‘replica of paradise’. Many centuries ago, when a Persian poet saw Kashmir, he exclaimed:

If there is heaven on earth, it is here! It is here! It is here!

When in the past Kashmir was referred to as a ‘replica of paradise’, it was not ruled by the ‘Kashmiri people’. It was ruled by the Mughals, and, later, by others, and then by the Dogras. In this entire period, Kashmir remained a ‘replica of paradise’. People would come to see it from all over the world. If in the Indian subcontinent the Taj Mahal was the epitome of architectural beauty, Kashmir was the epitome of natural beauty.

From this history of Kashmir, we learn that for Kashmir to be considered a ‘replica of paradise’ on earth, it was not at all necessary that it be ruled by a so-called government of the ‘Kashmiri people’. Governing power is actually a sort of political headache. Irrespective of whoever’s fate it is to suffer this political headache, Kashmir will remain Kashmir. The people of Kashmir need nothing for their progress other than their own constructive activities.



The Quran refers to everything that relates to what is good for human beings. But there is no mention of freedom in the sense of political freedom. This shows that 'freedom' is simply a deceptive term. It does not have any real meaningfulness. A clear practical proof of this is that today there are some 60 Muslim countries that, after immense sacrifices, won freedom from European colonial rule. But, in reality, these countries are not free. What happened in these Muslim countries was that the fight against an external foe later transformed into civil war. This might well happen with the Kashmiris, too. Either they keep up their so-called war of independence, which is bound to degenerate from being an externally-directed war into a devastating civil war, or else they end their present political conflict and focus all their energies on construction and progress.

In July 2001, I spent a week in Switzerland, attending an international conference. There was an 80 year-old Kashmiri lady in our team, who, when taken to various places of interest by the organisers, was so overwhelmed by the beauty of Switzerland that she exclaimed, 'Our Kashmir was once as beautiful as this, but today it is devastated!'

Who destroyed Kashmir? No Government was responsible for this. The only people to blame were those foolish leaders who, with their emotionally-driven rhetoric, inflamed the Kashmiri youth and pushed them on to the destructive path of militancy. If these leaders had instead set these youth on the path of education and constructive work, perhaps Kashmir would have been even better than Switzerland today. But the inept guidance of these incapable leaders so terribly damaged Kashmir that even an entire century will not suffice to make amends for it.

It is indispensable now for the Kashmiri people to completely abandon militancy and forever. They must adopt the way of peaceful construction. If the people of Kashmir were to do this wholeheartedly and sincerely, it would open a new and glorious chapter in Kashmir's history.

# Islam and World Peace

“Peace is the culture of nature,  
peace is the law of the universe.”

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

Lucidly written and expansive in scope, this work clears up the misunderstandings that abound on the subject of Islamic teachings about peace and war. It clearly states the authentic position on these matters, which is that Islam is a completely peaceful religion. In Islam, peace is the general rule or norm, and war is only an exception. Of the various names or attributes of God mentioned in the Quran, one is *As-Salam*, or ‘The Source of Peace’. That is to say, God is Peace. Islam’s mission centres on *tawhid*, the oneness of God. The Quran and the Prophet’s life clearly aim to transform people’s minds and hearts that they love just the one God, fear Him alone and make Him their greatest concern. This is the beginning of the Islamic mission as well as its finale. Ideal for students, scholars and the average reader, this brief and readable book provides keen insight into topics such as, the culture of peace, the ‘Islamisation’ of violence, terrorism, Islamic jihad, hijacking and hostage-taking, to name but a few.

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